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GLORIA

Gloria

A NOVEL

By B. PEREZ GALDÓS

Translated from the Spanish by

CLARA BELL

Two volumes bound as one

HOWARD FERTIG

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

I AM prompted to put this story before an English-reading public, not merely as a sketch of Spanish life—which it essentially is—but as a study of nature. The novelty of the scene, the distinctness and variety of the characters, and the liberal justice of the author's views—never put forward excepting dramatically—all raise it above the level of commonplace.

A translation is at best but the shadow of an original, however clearly cast; form and movement may remain but light and color are lost. Still, I hope that the shadow I have outlined may allow the reader to recognize the merits of the work—the charm of the two lovers, the equal and various goodness of the four Lantiguas, the humorous individuality of the braggart Curé, and the three religious gossips, of Caifás, Amarillo and Samson.

CLARA BELL.

GLORIA.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

THE CURTAIN RISES.

IN the distance, on a green hill bathed on the north by the ocean, and on the east by a meandering river, lies Ficóbriga, a town which it is vain to search for in any but an imaginary map of Spain, where indeed I found it. We will walk towards it, for the brilliant day and the freshness of the aromatic air are an invitation to wander. It is June, a delicious month in this seaboard district when the storm spares it the visitation of its terrific hand. To-day even the lashing and turbulent Bay of Biscay is at rest.

It allows the passing vessels to ride unmolested on its calm surface and plashes sleepily on the shore; while in the depths of the hollows, up the narrow creeks, through the rifts and over the rocks, its myriad tongues murmur sounds of peace. The undulating hills rise gently from the sea to

the mountains, each one asserting itself against the rest as though they vied with each other as to which should reach the summit.

Little country-houses of quaint aspect are scattered throughout the whole extent of the landscape, but at one point they seem to concentrate and combine, one sheltering itself against another, uniting in short to form that noble civic community, which is to be known to future ages as Ficóbriga. In the midst of it rises an unfinished tower, like a head bereft of its hat; nevertheless its two belfry windows are a pair of keen and watchful eyes, and within are three metal tongues which call the congregation to mass in the morning, and lift their voices in prayer as night swiftly falls.

All round the little town—for we have now reached it and can see—luxuriant harvest-fields and smiling pastures argue a considerable amount of agricultural skill. Wild brushwood and undergrowth enclose here and there an orchard—with honeysuckle covered with perfumed bunches of pale blossom like spread hands, thorny furze, enormous clumps of fern waving and fanning each other, a few green-crowned pines, and fig-trees innumerable—to which it no doubt owes its name of Ficóbriga.

And beyond, what a lovely spectacle is offered by the mountains! a vast staircase mounting to the skies. The most remote, in their pale hues, are lost among the clouds, and in the nearest we can detect many red scars looking like bleeding wounds; which in fact they are—cuts made by the miner's tool, as day by day he eats into the sturdy flanks of those giant forms. They rise precipitously towards the west, and in their remoter summits the play of light calls up the semblance of strange humps and crenellations, of towers and outworks, wens and rifts, till the monstrous pile is lost in the clouds.

After crossing a timber bridge, of which the rotting piles are half submerged in brackish mud, we mount a hill-side—we are now actually in Ficóbriga—down which the brook rushes, leaping as though not knowing whither it goes nor where the sea lies waiting to devour it; flinging itself into all the pools at high tide, and rushing out again as the sea ebbs. A few small boats float on its shallow waters, and God alone knows the toil it costs them to make a few yards of progress in the narrow passage when the breeze is sleeping and the tide bears the current downwards, toward the perilous bar.

The first houses we come to are miserable

enough, and the next not much better. Ficóbriga is a poor community of fishermen and laborers, a few wealthy natives repose on their commercial laurels in a dozen or so of pretty and convenient residences. But what streets! good heavens!

The crowded and squalid houses seem ready to tumble down, and from the miserable balconies hang nets, blue shirts, wet capes, and a thousand varieties of discolored and ragged raiment, while from the rotting eaves hang bunches of maize and of cuttle-fish left to dry, and long strings of garlic.

Passing in front of the Town Hall, which fills up one end of the Plaza, with an air of profound conviction that it is worth looking at, we reach the Abbey church, an ancient structure, half hidden among houses as old as itself, and composing a forlorn and wretched group of buildings; then turning our backs on the town, we come once more to the mouth of the river we first saw higher up, and here we reach a small plaza shaded by two acacias and a gnarled poplar. By this little shaded plot—and mark it well, for it is the scene of my story—stands a house, or, more correctly speaking, a palace, for as compared with its ruinous neighbors, its appearance is really magnificent. It is in fact composed of two buildings, one very old and

decorated with extravagant heraldic creatures, while the other is new and elegant, almost artistic, in the style of a villa, or cottage orné, as it is the fashion to say. To the south and east it is enclosed in a lovely garden, full of waving pine-trees, acacias in full bloom, planes, magnolias and conifers of various species, and between the verdurous branches we discern the five windows of the ground-floor rooms. There is a plentiful variety of shrubs; camellias asserting themselves almost as trees, clipped myrtles, tamarisks, and rose-trees, with a crowded undergrowth of pansies, geraniums, crown imperial and such small garden-folk; and these we can see through the openings in the iron fence wherever they are not overgrown by the officious creepers which seem eager to prevent the passer-by from knowing anything that goes on in the garden.

This delightful abode is situated on a spot whence the sea lies open to the north, and commands a view to the east of the wide and varied coast with the little river and the bridge, to the west of Ficóbriga, and to the south of the tilled land and the mountains. It is surrounded by a luxuriant and umbrageous growth of trees, and fanned by healthy breezes. It is a home that seems created for selfish love or for the meditative

life of the student; what happiness for a soul touched by passion or by the allurements of scientific curiosity to find so delicious a retreat wherein to bury itself, seeking by means of a seeming death to the outer world a wider life for itself alone.

The house itself is one of those which give the traveller pause and say to him "Can you guess, now, who lives here?"

Hush! the green Persian shutter is being opened from one of the windows which look out on the garden and towards the mountains. A slender hand hastily pushes it back, and the curtain, as it moves, affords a glimpse of a woman's face. Her eyes are as black as dark care. For an instant they explore the landscape, and if light flies fast and far, they flash farther and faster. Her face shows unmistakable traces of anxious expectancy and the painful eagerness of thoughts wholly absorbed by the image of one who does not come.

Looking at the mountains ourselves, we can in fact see nothing but the mountains. The graceful figure vanishes, but soon reappears to gaze once more, growing more impatient as time flies. It would almost seem as though her eager eyes longed to see through and beyond the range of

hills; but still on the distant roads nothing is to be seen in the shape of man or beast, and from being anxious she becomes impatient, and not impatient merely, but vexed; and from vexation she grows angry, and from anger passes to despair.

This pretty house now has for us the absorbing interest which attaches to every dwelling at whose window a pretty face is to be seen; and this gentle girl, these black eyes which seek and find not, which dart angry flashes at some unseen member of the creation—! Ah! this is the way of love.

Come, we will go in.

CHAPTER II.

GLORIA AND HER FATHER.

THEY were both in a room facing the south, with a window opening on to the garden which afforded a delightful outlook and admitted delicious perfumes. The room looked more like a counting-house than anything else from the heaps of books and papers that lay in every direction, while the walls were covered with maps and engravings of saints; there were too a bust of the

Pope and a large frame containing a portrait in oil of a reverend bishop, represented with a pen in his hand.

Here, in a wide arm-chair, sat Don Juan de Lantigua, a man something on the wrong side of fifty with a grave but very sympathetic countenance, and sufficiently intelligent expression. His brow and profile were not deficient in dignity though they had no academical regularity of outline; still the dominant expression in every feature was that of iron tenacity, such as must have stamped those of heroes—when there were yet heroes and of martyrs when there were still martyrs. But as he had passed his life without being either one or the other, it did not result from that. It seemed to be merely the natural physique of a man broken by study or by labor; at the same time his face bore a perceptible trace of serene melancholy, quite distinct from the theatrical misanthropy of an '*homme incompris*.' As we learn to know him better we shall see that this saddened mood of his, which so plainly rose from the depths to the surface of his nature, was something more than a discontented temper or dissatisfaction with himself, and was in fact a profound compassion for others.

Looking at his daughter, as for the hundredth

time, she fluttered to the window, he said in a kindly tone: "Gloria, for all your fidgeting and gazing, and waiting, and going back to gaze again, our dear traveller will come none the sooner. Keep quiet till he arrives."

Gloria returned to her father's side. She was nearly eighteen, and was tall, graceful and slightly built, vivacious and restless to a fault. Her face, which usually wore a tender color, betrayed a constant feverish excitement, like that of a person who is not where he fain would be, and her eyes seemed insufficient to satisfy her insatiable need of observing all that went on around her. Behind them lurked a spirit of inexhaustible vitality which craved incessant occupation. An enchanting creature! expectant of everything, as though nothing could take place in creation that was not of importance; noting the leaf as it fell from the tree, the fly that buzzed past her, each gust of wind, every sound from the boys in the street.

Her face, which was beyond everything expressive, and seemed to speak her thoughts, was far from perfect in feature; but the defects were such as we not only pardon but actually admire. Her mouth was somewhat larger, her nose perhaps somewhat smaller than they should have been but, as they were combined, they could not

have been more charming. Her rosy lips were the fairest and sweetest fruit that the tree of beauty could have to offer to the hungry gaze of a lover. And in brilliant contrast to the freshness of this dainty detail was the flashing glory of her dark eyes which now sparkled with a sudden radiance and now drooped with slumberous langour. Over these twin stars fell their long lashes. But, look as they might, a pure and innocent soul was mirrored in them; and a depth of feeling which, though ready to develop in time did not yet burn with genuine fire, threw off sparks at every moment; still this eagerness to feel strongly was as perfectly virtuous as that of other souls which have earned canonization by the same ardent nature.

The pretty child was fashionably dressed, with elegance, but without affectation. All she wore derived grace from herself, and not a single detail of her coiffure or her dress could be wished other than it was.

At the moment of our making her acquaintance Gloria's impatience had risen to such a pitch that every feature of her face betrayed it. When she quitted the window she walked incessantly about the room, taking up one thing after another and aimlessly changing its place, moving the

chairs without any reason of increased convenience in their altered position, and staring at the pictures which she already knew by heart. The saying might have been applied to her with justice: "Before a bird flies we see that it has wings."

CHAPTER III.

GLORIA IS EXPECTING NOT A LOVER BUT A BISHOP.

"IT is ten o'clock already, papa," said the girl impatiently. "From the station at Villamojada it is not more than two hours' drive."

"True, but God knows at what hour the train may have come in," answered her father. "That rapid innovation of civilization takes certain liberties—but impatience is useless. As soon as the carriage reaches the inn at Tres Casas old Gregorio will announce its approach by discharging a handful of rockets that will rouse the whole neighborhood with their explosion. Caifás is up in the belfry watching for the first notice to start a peal of bells. Even if he neglects this, they cannot take us by surprise; they will make too much noise."

Gloria flew off again to look at the Abbey, whose ancient tower rose above the surrounding roofs, and exclaimed joyfully :

“Yes, there is Caifás with all his children watching till he sees the first rocket before striking up the chimes. Good children, very good Paco and Celinina ; pull hard, pull away, Sildo, pull with all your might that you may be heard all over the province.”

Her father smiled pleasantly, proving the placid contentment of his spirit at that moment.

“Papa,” said Gloria, standing before him with a resolute air, “you may lay a wager that Francisca has not basted those four fowls, nor put the fish into the oven, nor arranged the sweet dishes ! That is just Francisca’s way—two hours to move each arm and two more to think about it, and nothing done—and the travellers will sit the whole blessed day expecting to be fed.”

As she spoke she rapidly went towards the door.

“Gloria, Gloria !” said her father, obliging her to stop. “Come here—don’t leave the room ; listen—”

“Oh ! I cannot, cannot imagine how on a busy day like this you can take things with such blessed calmness !” exclaimed the girl sitting down. “My

blood is boiling—they will arrive and nothing will be ready.”

“My child,” said the old man, “you ought to learn to be less vehement and not take so much to heart little things that are of such small importance to body or soul. When shall I teach you the calmness and balance of mind we ought always to preserve in face of the common occurrences of life? Tell me, if you throw so much eager excitability and ardor, so much energy and agitation into these trivial matters, what will you do when you meet with one or another of the graver accidents and problems of life? Reflect on this, my child, and moderate your impetuous impulses. Why, poor Francisca, whom you are so ready to accuse, might give you a lesson in this; see with what admirable method and foresight and what quiet punctuality she manages all the work of the house. She seems to be slow, and yet she does everything in time and everything thoroughly, while you, on the other hand, with your impatient haste, often make mistakes, and either finish nothing—or, if you finish it, it has all to be done over again. I have seen plenty of vehement women, bewildering ones, hasty ones, swift as the wind and bright as a flash of light, but you, child, beat them all. Thank God that He has made you kind-hearted, pious,

and virtuous, that He bestowed on you an upright and generous nature, that He implanted in your heart the gifts of faith, pure and noble feelings and His ineffable grace, leaving the excitability on the surface."

"And if it was God who gave me so many good gifts," said Gloria with all the conviction of a father of the church, "it was He too who gave me this hasty nature, this impatience of life passing slowly, this anxiety each day for to-morrow."

"Let us see. What reason can there be for the feverish restlessness into which you have been thrown by your uncle's approaching visit?"

"I have not slept for three nights," answered the girl. "Indeed what less could happen. Can we receive a Bishop like any vulgar mortal? My uncle will bring with him, besides his secretary Doctor Sedeño, perhaps two of his pages or at any rate one; and must not matters be so arranged as to do honor to such an illustrious guest? If I were to trust to Francisca I might take patience till next year. Do you suppose there is but little to do? Nothing of the kind; why the whole of the ground-floor is not enough for the party that is coming, and I am not going to set them down to a table with nothing on it but bread, wine and olives. Roque has had to make three jour-

neys to fetch what was necessary. And how about the chapel?"

"Well, and what about the chapel?"

"Nothing; but his Reverence will want to perform mass there, as he did last time. And a pretty state the chapel was in! We had to wash the Christ three times, for the flies had done his sacred person more dishonor than the Jews. The Virgin's robe was ruined. I had to burn it and make her a new one out of the velvet you bought for me. I thought we should never get the stains out of the candlesticks with all the whitening we had in the house, but luckily Caifás and I could rub hard, and it has all come as bright as gold. But, do you know, the rats have begun to eat away the feet of St. John!"

"Abominable brutes!" exclaimed Don Juan, laughing.

"There is no knowing what they will not do! But thanks to Caifás, who is so clever, he has filled up the wounds in the saint's feet with some sort of paste or putty, and with a touch of paint they have come out very well. But those rascally vermin, that respect nothing, will not do any more mischief! In three days after the rat-trap was set and baited eleven were caught, as big as wolves! And you still think I have little to do!"

“ I think you have plenty to do.”

“ Well, then, there are the clothes I had to make for Caifás' children, that they might turn out decently to receive my uncle—and you wonder that I am incessantly in and out, and up and down. It is my way dear papa.”

“ It is your way—I know that; God bless you!”

“ I love my uncle dearly; he is a saint, and I am so happy to think that he is going to live under the same roof with me! All that we have seems to me too little to do him honor and give him pleasure, and I should like to bring him all the wonders of a king's palace; not having these, I rack my brain to devise every luxury and prodigality to arrange a worthy reception for a man who in God's eyes—Oh! I cannot bear myself!—I cannot keep quiet—I lie awake in a perfect fever—I pass the night without sleep, thinking of Francisca's dawdling, of the chapel, of poor St. John being gnawed away, of the spotted candlesticks, of the rats, the smallness of our house for such an illustrious guest.—”

“ And do you think,” interrupted her father with gentle persuasion, “ that my brother wants a palace and luxury and ostentation? No my child. As a disciple of Christ my brother is humble. If

this house were no better than a hovel, it would be no less worthy to shelter him. Let us offer him pure hearts, fervent faith and a sincere respect for his eminent virtues, rejoicing in the glow of his presence, to observe and imitate him; let us absorb into ourselves some of the infinite treasures of his heart which is filled with the Divine Spirit, and take no care for the rest—”

“That is the first thing; but still—”

“Whether shabby and poor or resplendent with wealth the chapel will always be a sacred spot since my brother has celebrated mass there, and will again when the workmen have repaired the roof that has fallen in. And if the rats have dared to attack the feet of St. John, it is because these wretched animals—and they too are God’s creatures—found nothing more to their taste. The image is none the less that of a saint, nor would he have ceased to intercede for us, even if we had not called in the ingenious Caifás to repair the damage. Do not care so much my child for the outward appearance of things; let your spirit rise above the level of what appeals only to the senses, do not fret so much about things that will chain it too closely to the earth—that is what I desire for you. And above all your ardent eagerness about the unimportant event of a day does not please me.”

Hardly had he uttered the last words of his little lecture, when they heard a distant crackling sound in the air, then another and another, as if the angels were cracking nuts in the sky.

"There they are!" cried Gloria, all her soul glowing in her eyes.

"Yes—there is my brother," said Lantigua calmly going to the window. "He is welcome, very welcome."

CHAPTER IV.

SEÑOR DE LANTIGUA AND HIS IDEAS.

DON JUAN CRISÓSTOMO DE LANTIGUA, was the son of parents who had been of some worship in the town where we have just made his acquaintance, and years and the cares of life had already told upon him. The wealth he had been master of since 1860, the modern house and the quiet life he now enjoyed, he had derived from an uncle who had returned from Mexico with a perfect burthen of hard cash which, in a short time, he let slip from his shoulders, along with that of life, for he died in the early days of his retirement from labor. His fortune which was splendid de-

volved on his three nephews and a niece; Don Angel, at that time chaplain at Reyes Nuevos; Don Juan, a lawyer of good reputation, and their much younger brother and sister Don Buenaventura and Doña Serafinita de Lantigua. For the present it is not necessary to my purpose to speak of the two latter; I will set them aside in favor of their brothers, and at first more particularly of Don Juan de Lantigua.

This worthy man had been endowed with a passionate and fervid nature, a vivid imagination that tended to contemplation, a bright intelligence with a taste for paradox, and strong feelings, with an impulse towards exaggeration alike in his emotions and in his ideas. His first efforts in advocacy were both profitable and brilliant, and even after his uncle's inheritance had secured him an easy competency, he did not wholly abandon the legal profession. To give up all discussion and disputation would have been equivalent to giving up his life.

Absorbed by an insatiable love of learning he combined theology and the history of political science with his study of jurisprudence. He devoted himself by preference to sifting out from among the writers—mystics or historians—of the golden age of Spanish literature, all that could be

regarded as of permanent value and consequently applicable to the science of government in all ages. Still, from the enthusiasm of his earlier years and from prejudices conceived he knew not how, his opinions remained pertinaciously inseparable from certain ideas; so that, even in all good faith, he was incapable of judging with complete impartiality either the lives or the works of those who for so many centuries have been employed in discussing the means of raising the level of humanity.

His contemplative bent led him to regard religious faith not merely as the ruling and master power of the individual through his conscience, but also as an official institution, whose function it was to rule and guide from outside all human affairs. He ascribed a magic charm to authority, and no force or place, or a very small one, to liberty. A few years after having thrown himself into this abyss of studies—this whirlpool of controversy—Don Juan de Lantigua emerged again strong in syllogisms and erudition; with impressive self-confidence he defied the frivolous and disbelieving crowd. Politics invited him to mount the tribune, and once there, the cloud which had concentrated in itself so much passion and so much learning broke in thunder and lightning against the age we live in.

The new Isaiah's eloquence was withering. His enemies—for he had some in the flesh—his enemies said: "Lantigua is the advocate of all the Bishops and Curates, he makes a harvest out of cases of spoliation, of chaplaincies, and of ecclesiastical discipline. It is but fair that he should flatter and serve those who give him work." These impertinences, common enough in these days, only made Don Juan smile; he never took the trouble to defend himself against the charge because, as he said, it was well not to deprive fools of the right of talking folly.

He was esteemed by all as a man of deep and immutable convictions, an honorable gentleman in his social relations, and of a blameless character. In daily practical life Lantigua agreed very kindly with men of the most opposite opinions, and even knew them as intimate friends, very high in his regard, though without ever being able to convince them. But in the realm of ideas he was irreconcilable, and his stony fixity could never be shaken from its foundation by anything or anybody. The storms of the revolution of '48, the Roman republic, the unity of Italy, the fall of the Austrian dominion there, the humiliation of the French, the destruction of the temporal power of the Pope, the reconstruction of Germany—a Min-

erva sprung from the brain of Bismarck—and other less important events which, bearing only on Spain itself, were no more than squalls passing across the sky of Europe—produced no effect on the mind of this remarkable worthy beyond an increased conviction that all humanity was perverse and desperate, and needed a strait-waist-coat.

These facts and other recent disasters on his native soil brought Lantigua to a miserable pitch of irritation, and gave a stern and gloomy tone to his writings and his discourses. He fulminated abuse of his century, prophesying of a confusion of tongues and from the confusion a dispersion, and from the dispersion slavery; until a revival of the Catholic faith in hearts made fruitful of good through misfortunes, should reorganize the nations and gather them in under the sheltering robe of the Church. According to his views the much-talked-of laws of human progress were leading us to a Nebuchadnezzar. On this point Lantigua would rather die than yield. And indeed how could he yield? Those who have reduced all their conceptions to the overwhelming, but stultifying formula, "Christ or Barabbas," are forced to allow themselves to be driven to the extremest consequences, since the smallest concession is in

their opinion equivalent to ranging themselves on the side of Barabbas.

CHAPTER V.

HOW HE BROUGHT UP HIS DAUGHTER.

DON JUAN DE LANTIGUA did not in his own person direct the education of his only daughter. Besides the fact that his business as a lawyer and as an orator allowed him but little leisure to devote to her, he thought that to consign her to a school was all-sufficient. The important point was to know in what school sound principles on every point were to be found. It must be mentioned that he had become a widower after fourteen years of married life. His worthy wife had presented him with Gloria, then twelve years old, and two infants, both gone to Heaven—as was said in Ficóbriga—before they had fairly learned to walk on earth.

Gloria, after remaining for a few years at a school named in honor of one of the most sacred attributes of the Virgin Mary, returned home mistress of the catechism, at the head of her class in history, sacred and profane, with many, though

confused ideas of geography, astronomy, and physics; murdering French without thoroughly knowing her own language, and possessed of but a slender knowledge of the arts of needle-work. She knew the "Duty of Man" by heart, without missing a single syllable or even a letter, and was quite a mistress in piano-forte playing, deeming herself fully capable of performing any one of those horrible fantasias which are the delight of young-lady pianists, the dread of their hearers, and an insult to musical art.

Lantigua made her repeat to him some passages of sacred history, and did not seem satisfied.

"In the schools of the present day," said he, "they train the minds of children to a set of ideas just as they do their fingers to the key-board. They think, as they play, and repeat in mechanical phrases the conceptions of others."

One day when Gloria, seeing him immersed in some abstruse commentary on the religious unity imposed upon Nations after the attainment of political union, declared that, in her opinion, the kings of Spain had done very wrongly in expelling the Jews and Moors from the country. Lantigua opened his eyes very wide, and after gazing at her in silence during a short spasm of extreme astonishment, he said:

“This is more learned than I could have expected! What do you understand about such things? Go and play the piano.”

Gloria flew off like a bird inspired to glad song, and seating herself on the music-stool she ran her fingers over the keys; she began to play something that sounded like a perfect medley. Lantigua knew nothing about music. He had heard the names of Mozart and Offenbach and all music was the same to him, that is to say, was idle amusement. Still his superior intelligence and delicate taste enabled him to distinguish instinctively the enormous differences between the various kinds of music he had heard and, generally speaking, everything that Gloria played seemed to him detestable.

“You cannot imagine what I would give my child,” said he, “to hear you play anything but those dreadful grinding organ tunes. Do not tell me that all music is the same, for I certainly have heard somewhere—in church perhaps or it may be in a theatre—solemn and pathetic compositions which touched something deeper down than the mere outward senses, which stirred my soul and moved me to blissful meditation. Do you know nothing of that sort?”

Gloria went through her whole stock of fanta-

sias, nocturnes, "Fleurs de salon," and "Pluies de perles" without lighting on the solemn and touching works that would satisfy her father's exalted demands. In the cause of truth which overrides everything, even the prestige and fair report of my gentle heroine, it must be confessed that Gloria thrashed and thumped the piano in a very lamentable manner, as though the notes had been convicted of a horrible crime and deserved castigation for the space of three hours daily.

"That is enough for this evening little one," said Don Juan. "Take a book and read awhile."

Gloria went to her father's library, looked along every shelf, and opened a book which she disdainfully restored to its place. She chose another, read a few pages, but was soon tired of it.

"What are you looking for? Novels?" asked her father, coming into the room and surprising her in her search—"I have a few somewhere—here."

"Ivanhoe—" said Gloria reading a title.

"That is a good one; but leave it alone for the present. Very few novels have found their way in here. Of all the nastiness and rubbish that every day has brought forth in France and Spain during the last forty years, you will not find a single

page—of good works, there are a few, very few—but I think that you will find buried in some corner Chateaubriand, Swift, Bernardin de St. Pierre, and above all my prime favorite Manzoni.”

Nevertheless Don Juan prohibited novels for some little time to come for even good ones, he said, fired the imagination and prompted wild hopes and fears in a girl’s inexperienced heart, and prejudiced her judgment by giving a dangerously false poetic coloring to the persons and things that she came into contact with.

On the other hand Gloria, if she might not read for herself, might read for her father. Don Juan as a result of overwork in study, of the constant excitement of his brain, and of the late hours and sleepless nights which were occasioned by his passion for political agitation, was losing his sight. He could not read at all at night, but, as the work he was engaged upon required at every page constant reference to the texts of Quevedo, Navarrete, and Saavedra Fajardo, he established his daughter as his reader. Don Juan had been for some time engaged on a commentary on the ascetic and philosophical discoveries of Quevedo, for that colossal genius of satire rests from his titanic laughter in laconic gravity. Gloria read aloud the “Life of St. Paul.” “The Cradle and the Grave,”

and "The Four Plagues of the World." Then she lost herself in the "Economy of God and Dominion of Christ," and as the learned collector of the books had been happily inspired to bind up in the same volume the incomparable "History of Buscon," Gloria, as often as her father released her from reading in order to write, simply turned over a hundred pages or so, and stifling herself to choke down the laughter which struggled to burst out, she amused herself with the delectable naughtiness of the great Pablo.

On other occasions, as Don Juan made no objection to the classical works of the 'golden age' of Spanish literature, Gloria took possession of various volumes and read "Virtue and religion à la mode," by Fulgencio de Ribera, she had nearly, very nearly plunged into "La Pícará Justina," but Lantigua laid hands upon it and only permitted Guzman de Alfarache. Unluckily the same volume contained *La Celestina*.*

* The reader who is curious to appreciate the character of Gloria's studies may reasonably compare the works of Quevedo with the coarser writings of Chaucer, with *Hudibras* or *Gulliver's Travels*. Quevedo was however as great in religious controversy and moral essays as in satire. The adventures of Don Pablo el Buscon, are by some writers ranked only next to *Don Quixote*. This work has been frequently reprinted, and translated into English, French and German. The works of Navarrete and of Saavedra Fajardo are contained in Vol. XXV, of a collection of Spanish authors, edited by Ariball and others.—Madrid, 1846; 55 volumes in all.—*Translator*.

CHAPTER VI.

THE YOUNG LADY EXPLAINS HER VIEWS.

WITH no other guide than her own healthy and unprejudiced judgment, Gloria, discussing one day with her father the old vexed subject of the novels which a young girl might be permitted to read, said that the mischievous literature of which Spain was so boastful on the ground of its splendor of style, seemed to her a wretched growth; immoral and irreverent, in short opposed to religion; since it was in fact a standing apology for evil, for dissipation and buffoonery, and for all the pernicious maxims and coarse amusements that degrade a nation; and she concluded by declaring with really audacious boldness that all the graces of those reprobates—the heroes of such novels—even if at first they might please her fancy, would soon nauseate and bore her—nay that they were often in themselves indelicate or disgusting and had tended to debase the language.

If we may believe witnesses of this conversation, whose veracity is above suspicion, Gloria, *mutatis mutandis* went on to the effect that any

one who had the courage to plunge into the labyrinth of immoralities and falsities, of coarseness and baseness which are painted with so much relish in this class of works, could only conclude from them that the society of the seventeenth century was a society of artists, as regards the imagination, but, as to conscience, in its dotage; but he would learn to understand the decadence of the Spanish race which had preserved no greater virtue than a mere blind heroism, and no moral vigor efficient to supply the lack of a pure standard of virtue and of any single-hearted religion untainted by superstition.

It is said that Don Juan, as he listened to this tirade, found himself greatly confused and perplexed; not so much by reason of the strangeness of these views, as of the calm frankness with which his daughter expressed them; and his perplexity was followed by a real alarm at the precocious aptitude displayed by Gloria for argument and paradox, but, as he observed that the erratic character of her mind was seconded by a good deal of spirit, he concluded that the best method would be to guide her with gentleness into the right way. Acting on this idea, he desired his daughter to go through a long course of Calderon's plays, accompanying this by a daily dose of the mystics and

religious writers in prose and verse, so as to produce a radical change in her ideas of Spanish society in 'the golden age.'

The young lady did in fact follow the course prescribed by her father, and at the end of a few weeks admitted that her views had changed a little, but by no means radically. She explained, in homelier phraseology than I shall use to render her meaning quite clear, that in the social life of those times, she observed, besides the faults before mentioned, a feverish tendency towards idealism which, though it gave birth to splendid results in poetry and the arts, was meanwhile undermining the foundations of society. She was disgusted alike by the scoundrels, the ruffians, the highwaymen, by the students, soldiers and writers, by the judges and physicians, the husbands, the wives and the lovers of that period of literature; and yet all the types bore a fascinating stamp of veracity. As a protest against this tribe of rabble, the gallants and ladies, the illustrious fathers and the rustic hidalgos of these dramas and comedies surely ought, with their elevated notions and brilliant deeds, to have been able to establish the reign of justice and virtue; but, according to Gloria's judgment it was the very beauty of these inimitable types that gave this whole literature the mel-

ancholy semblance of a person who during a whole century had been striving after an object and had failed in attaining it. Lantigua smiled at so obvious an absurdity, and Gloria declared—using of course a simpler set of words—that this ideal of love and honor was not the best nor the soundest foundation for insuring the moral stability of the social edifice, and she then went on to speak of the mystics, pointing out in them a deficiency of balance between imagination and judgment, and asserting that their writings, beautiful as they were in many places, could never serve as a guide to the generality of minds since they must fail to be understood by them. She summed up on this point by saying that she could not bear that religion should be discussed but with the utmost simplicity and singleness, and for that reason esteemed the plain catechism of the schools above all the treatises and dissertations of the mystics for it used language as plain as that of Christ himself and made all clear.

At this juncture, it seems that Don Juan de Lantigua, not without laughing at his daughter, made some observations on the profound philosophy and studies of the Divinity and of man which were contained in these works.

Gloria maintaining that the society which, ac-

ording to her father's ideas, was a perfect type, had over-refined and so weakened the ideal of religion, allowing itself to be misled by these very outward symbols which that idealistic religion made use of, not merely as useful auxiliaries but, at the same time, as a homage paid by truth to the eternal archetype of beauty.

“These novels about buffoons and reprobates,” said Gloria in conclusion. “These comedies full of carpet knights, gallant no doubt, and discreet, though not always spotless from the point of view of Christian morality—these long dissertations in which I lose my way from my total inability to follow the thread of the involved argument, give me a very sufficient idea of the people for whom such things were written. I see that they must have had very elastic consciences and extreme toleration for the greater number of those vices which in all ages have soiled and degraded man. There were among them, no doubt, generous characters, who honestly thought they were fulfilling their mission and giving play to the nobler impulses of the soul, upholding like a sacred standard, high above the universal turpitude, an ideal of honor and of faith. But still the people, whom they had never taught to discern, that were merely vegetating in vice, unfit for honest labor, and

dreaming of wars which led to pillage or of conquests, which led to easy fortune, understood nothing that was not addressed to their sense; they cared for nothing—not even for the sublime mystery of the Eucharist—that did not offer itself to their apprehension in the guise of a comedy.

“On one hand I see the base and vulgar reality, an epidemic of squalid wretchedness, of ragged and vacuous indolence in which the mass of the nation seethed—asking its doom from the king, from the nobles the overflow from their luxurious tables, from the monks their broken victuals, and from the destiny that governs nations new lands to plunder. On the other side I see nothing better than well-fed men before whose eyes shone an ideal of glory and of dominating the universe, a vision which presently vanished, leaving them with their arquebuses in their hands ready cocked—to kill sparrows! In art again I see two aspects: the poets who sing of love and honor and the mystics and cloister poets who passed their days in seeking fresh formulas in which to express to the vulgar the sacred dogmas of faith. One of these muses exalts human love, the other divine love, but they use the same poetical forms, the same similes, almost the same words, no doubt because all the languages of the

world were made for human use and everything has to be uttered in human guise.

“The poets, the great warriors, the monks, theologians and men of cultivation had vague notions of a better polity and of a moral state superior to that of the paupers, the destitute, the ragged villains and the rest of the lower orders. They disagreed among themselves; things were not going right, but they knew not how to mend them. These demanded bread, good fortune, and creature comforts, and finding no one who would give them these, they robbed whoever they could; those craved for glory, exalted love, ecstatic faith, religion, chivalry, perfect justice, perfect goodness, perfect beauty, still they could never agree. Cervantes seized upon these two opposing principles which stood confronted in that fever-stricken society, and wrote the most admirable book that Spain and that century have produced. It is sufficient only to read that book in order to understand that the state of society which gave it birth could never succeed in finding a solid foundation on which to build up a stable moral and political structure.—And why? Because Don Quixote and Sancho Panza could never succeed in meeting each other half-way.”

It seems that on the occasion when Gloria, in

her own fashion delivered herself of these opinions there were present besides her father half a dozen or so important personages who enjoyed a reputation for sagacity.

They praised the young girl's acuteness and intelligence, smiled at her wit, and admired her quaint originality, skilfully mingling criticism with gallantry, and one of them, more curious than the rest, expressed a wish to know what she understood by the meeting half-way of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza ; Gloria, though in some confusion at the doubtful issue of her daring discourse, went on :

“You who are so much wiser than I am cannot have failed to perceive that if Don Quixote, like Sancho, had learned to see things in their true shapes and colors, he might perhaps have been able to realize some portion of the sublime conceptions of his great soul, just as his squire—but I will say no more, for you are laughing at me. I know that what I have said may seem strange, and perhaps sound ill or ridiculous from me, much of it even inconsistent with truths which you know better than I—and if so account it as unsaid or as mere folly on my part.”

Later in the evening, when these learned personages had withdrawn their majestic presence,

Don Juan de Lantigua, who had been greatly put out by his daughter's extravagant opinions, reproved her with dignity, desiring her for the future to be juster in her interpretation of history and literature. He told her that a woman's intelligence was not equal to appreciate such a wide subject, since extensive reading was not sufficient for its comprehension, not even by a man of sound judgment and experienced in criticism. He told her also that much had been written by illustrious thinkers on various branches of religion, politics, and history, forming a code of opinion before which the unlearned must bow; and he ended by burlesquing the unsuitable and shocking views that Gloria had put forward, views which, if she put no check upon herself, must obviously lead her into error, heresy, and even to immorality.

Gloria retired to her bedroom—for it was by this time late—much perplexed, and there meditated for a long time; and so strong was her father's influence that she arrived at the fullest conviction that she had been guilty of endless follies, absurdities, and gross improprieties. Still, being anxious to absolve herself, she laid the blame on the books she had read, and made a vow henceforth to read nothing written or printed excepting her prayers, the household accounts,

and her uncle's letters. Then, kneeling down to say her prayers as usual, she began :

“I thank thee O God for having shown me my folly betimes !”

But when she was in bed she found that it was very difficult to leave off thinking of all sorts of wild and exciting things, for that faculty of hers for keen discernment was a fertile incubus which persistently asserted itself, giving rise to fresh and pregnant thoughts ; and she soon perceived that, though her books had no doubt served to stimulate the constant flow of various thoughts and original views, the phenomenon would not be interrupted even if she entirely gave up reading. This troubled her.

“If I cannot help thinking,” she said to herself, “I can at least hold my tongue.”

But in point of fact, without giving vent to her thoughts in words, her faculties were perpetually in a fever of excitement, and nothing escaped her observation. For a long time her father never alluded by a single word to any serious subject. She attended divine worship with extreme punctuality and devotion, and with great pleasure ; in other things she showed an interest in the smallest details of all that was going on, and an almost childish minuteness in carrying out the duties of

her daily life. In short her wings had been clipped, and this is how and where we first find her.

Still, in her hours of solitude, in moments of exalted feeling, in those twilight hours of our mental perception which precede or follow sleep, and when it is apt to be keenest, Gloria heard low voices within her, as if some spirit had taken possession of her brain and was saying to her :

“You have a superior intelligence—the eyes of your mind can see it all—open them wide and look ; rouse yourself and think.”

At the time when she had read, and given her opinion on the literature and society of the ‘golden age’ Gloria was sixteen years old.

CHAPTER VII.

GLORIA'S LOVE AFFAIRS.

AT the time, however, when this story opens she was eighteen. She had not as yet had any experience of love-making or of suitors, no particular liking for any eligible youth, nor any symptoms of having parted with the smallest portion of her heart to any man living. And Don Juan did not subject her to any inquisitorial supervision, nor

prohibit her going to the theatre, out walking, or to evening gatherings under the escort of her female relatives. The overworked father rested in peace, and in implicit confidence in the perfect honesty and unimpeachable virtue of his sister-in-law, Doña Maria del Rosario.

But though the young men of Gloria's acquaintance did not arouse her to the most moderate interest, her feelings were not dormant. When only twelve years old she had lost her mother, whose place she had filled to two little brothers, one three years old and the other only fifteen months; but these both died within a few days of each other. She herself, after watching them with the greatest care during their illness, had closed their eyes and decked their little biers, laying flowers in their hands and on their breasts, and she had followed them to the grave when Caifás had carried them to the cemetery of Ficóbriga. The memory of her two innocent playfellows always held a large place in their sister's heart, and she rarely passed the rural burial-ground where their mortal remains were laid, without shedding some tears.

Besides this Gloria's heart was overflowing with transcendental and pious affection for her uncle Don Angel, Bishop of Tresestellas. She looked

upon him as a saint who had stepped down from the altar, or more properly from Heaven, to condescend to her, to give her good advice, living under the same roof and eating the same bread.

This holy man's diocese was situated in Andalucía, and he very rarely visited Madrid, but at last his feeble health compelled him to seek refreshment in his native air, and he was now accustomed to pass some weeks every summer at Ficóbriga with his brother and his niece. It was not therefore for his first visit that we have seen his arrival announced by rockets; the same ceremony had been observed two years since.

The pure and intense affection which Gloria felt for her uncle was one of those which may be classed under the head of the first law of the Decalogue. He was to her an image of God on earth. She remembered that during a severe illness she had gone through as a child her uncle had come from his distant home to see her, and that the extreme joy she had felt on seeing him seemed to bring new life and fire to her body and soul; she liked to fancy that a heavenly hand had rescued her from the dark abyss into which she had been sinking. As she got well, though she was allowed to play in the room she was not permitted to leave it, and then the Bishop, laying aside his

breviary, would take his seat close to the table on which Gloria had put out a complete set of household furniture, with diminutive chairs and tables, utensils for cooking and for service, and a dozen or two of ladies and gentlemen of the highest rank, some of which were at home, while the others were company. His reverence would discuss at length the arrangement of the seats and sofas, and the two would pass long hours in imaginary visits, paying compliments, with greetings and welcome, on behalf of the card-board performers in the improvised drama. Then came dinner-time for the residents on the table; the Bishop and the little girl were the busiest people in the world—emptying the saucepans no bigger than thimbles, skimming stewpans in which a few morsels of bread stood for fowls and turkeys, and blowing imaginary fires in cold ovens.

“Please lay the table-cloth, uncle.” “Take care there, little one; do not be so eager.” “Is the fish fried yet?” “To a turn—I quite long to eat it myself.” “Look uncle, will you wash those plates while I wipe the spoons? Make haste.” “Well, you be quick too, then.” “Now, it is all ready; walk in ladies. The music uncle, the music!”—“All right, the music is beginning, ta-ra, tan-ta-ra;” and a gentle humming, like some

hymn by Riego, or some state march, with an accompaniment of drums on the table, performed by the wooden fists of a doll, succeeded the eager chatter of the two voices, both equally childlike and clear. And in these placid dialogues, carried on in a peaceful room where the outside world could not penetrate, theological matters had no part, but from time to time the dolls would be left lying topsy-turvy, saucepans, visitors, the kitchen, the dinner-party, all forgotten; Gloria, fixing her wide eyes on her uncle's calm and beatific countenance, would ask him to tell her what Heaven was like and the angel and the saint, the equally innocent child and prelate, would talk about it with all the eagerness of exiles talking of their native land.

Long years after, when in her conversations with her father Gloria gave signs of that precocity which has been mentioned, Don Angel would laugh so heartily that it was quite a temptation to go on talking nonsense, if only to enjoy his amusement. The Bishop would vouch for his niece's orthodoxy with the utmost gravity, and on so delicate a point he never sought the opportunity for censuring her, while on the contrary, he took every occasion of praising her, and her affection for him constantly grew and increased.

And now, at last, for my story.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SUITOR.

THE rocket, as was told some pages back, had been seen to burst, and almost at the same instant the bells of the Abbey pealed out, the sharp tone of the treble mingling with the solemn booming of the *bourdon* to announce the happy event to the inhabitants of Ficóbriga. These all rushed out into the street; the boatmen and caulkers came from the shore, the laborers and shepherds left the fields, swarms of children rushed together from everywhere; all the municipal authorities appeared in full costume, and not a soul remained within doors. This enthusiastic welcome arose from the high esteem in which all the Lantiguas, and particularly Don Angel, were held in the town and neighborhood.

Now of all the important personages who came forth to greet the Bishop, the most eager and forward was Don Silvestre Romero, the chief priest or curé of the town. He was followed by a certain Don Juan Amarillo—running as fast as his little legs would carry him—a wealthy man of sallow complexion who bore his name (Amarillo

yellow or gold color), not because he was the great money-lender of the district—as in point of fact he was—but because he had inherited it from his worthy forefathers. Then came the apothecary, an intelligent and hard-working man who was on the high-road to riches; and not backward in the race, but one of the first to rush into the street—buttoning his trousers of somewhat antique cut and which he had only just put on—was Bartolomé Barabás, the radical spirit of the district, *ex-domine* with a taint of philosophy, a school-master with a touch of the politician nay of the orator and, as occasion served, of the newspaper writer. After him came several of the better class of townfolk walking with gravity and composure, for men who have passed all their lives in hard work cannot demean themselves like street-boys, or like idlers, such as Don Bartolomé. They were accompanied, as it were, by their sombreros or broad felt-hats—for on so great an occasion the sombrero must be brought out—and by their umbrellas to defy the threatening clouds.

When Don Angel reached the first houses of the town, he got out of his coach to embrace his brother and his niece, and he was greeted with a shout that sounded like the roar of a storm-beaten sea, while caps and hats waved in the air, and the

umbrellas of the upper class—those majestic personages—spread their sombre surface to ward off a few drops which fell at just the right moment. The people crowded on his Reverence to kiss his ring, and Don Angel found much difficulty in getting as far as the Abbey-church, where he paused for a few moments to pray. Then, from the Abbey to the house, the crowd was greater than ever and the interference of the municipal authorities—always watchful in all that concerned the good order of the populace—was requisite to disperse the dense multitude.

When the prelate had arrived at the house, he wished to retire to the little chapel attached to it to offer up a thanksgiving; but his brother explained to him that the ruinous state it was in rendered it unfit for use, and that the masons were employed in preparations for repairing it at once; so his Eminence conversed for a time in the down-stairs room with the dignitaries of Ficóbriga who had come up to meet him.

The house was all astir with people moving about in every direction, up stairs and down. Gloria was rushing towards the stairs to go up and give some order when she suddenly met a young man face to face; they both smiled—she with surprise, he with pleasure.

His Reverence the Bishop had brought with him three gentlemen, two of them priests and one a layman. The layman, who stands before us, was a young man of about thirty, slight, fresh-colored and well grown; his eyes were dark, but he wore light gold spectacles, over which his eyebrows curved gracefully like the arches of an antique bridge; his beard was full and yellowish, his countenance intelligent and his bearing manly, nay to a certain point elegant. His manners were easy, and his speech a little pompous, like that of a man who likes to hear himself talk and who has heard himself, a good deal, in halls of justice, in parliament or in some of the societies of the advanced and youthful spirits which exist in Madrid. He had nothing sanctimonious about him or savoring of the friar, as we might expect, from finding him in such clerical company.

This was the man who met Gloria on the bottom step of the stairs, and who seemed somewhat startled at seeing her.

“What! you here Rafael? Did you come with my uncle?” asked the young lady after the first greetings.

“I came with his Reverence, but I remained a little behind because our coach was rather slow in climbing the hill,” replied the young man clasp-

ing the girl's hand. "I hear you all are well, Señor Don Juan is as young as ever, and you still as fair."

"I thought you never went out of Madrid. Things are just now in such confusion there—"

"There, and here, and on all sides! There is no knowing where people will stop. I came to Ficóbriga partly on certain election affairs and partly on an errand of my own—but Don Juan will tell you. I came in the same train as his Reverence, who at once offered me a seat in his coach and hospitality in his house. I would not accept it for fear of being in the way; besides, I had promised my intimate friend the curé to stay with him a few days."

"You will be here a long time, will you not?"

"I would gladly stay the rest of my life," said the young man with an expression of amorous softness on his grave features, and raising his eyebrows till they stood half-way up his forehead. "I saw you for the last time in Doña Maria Rosario's house. What a sly creature to abandon us to such solitude! Do you remember what we were talking about that last evening?"

Gloria began to laugh.

"Two days later I was again at my friend's

house, but the bird had flown; and Ficóbriga is always the same thing—I hate these people.”

“You hate them!” exclaimed the girl.

“Not now—no, not here,” the young man eagerly replied. “This spot is a Paradise. Unfortunately the election business will not detain me here much more than a fortnight—and how delightful it is to live here, so near to you, Gloria! It seems like a dream, and yet it is reality! To see you every day, every hour—”

“The honor is ours, Señor del Horro; but I must beg you to excuse me. I must go to order them to bring down some sweetmeats. Francisca, do you hear, Francisca!”

CHAPTER IX.

A RECEPTION, A CONVERSATION AND AN INTRODUCTION.

THE young man entered the drawing-room; there were there already the two brothers Langtigua, Doctor Lopez Sedeño, his Reverence’s secretary and his page, Don Juan Amarillo, the curé, and the magistrate, three gentlemen of the town, and Don Bartolomé Barrabás who, notwithstanding his republican principles, did not hesitate to

pay a tribute of respectful homage to the man who was the glory of Ficóbriga, though this glory was clothed in the form of a prelate of the established Church. The curé of Ficóbriga, Don Silvestre Romero, was a man of great importance, with an expression at once hard and sensual, like that of a Roman emperor, and yet frank and sympathetic, and he was beginning an address—not without some embarrassment—which he had brought ready prepared, and of which History, to her shame be it said, has preserved only a few sentences.

“All the inhabitants of this humble town,” said he, “feel the liveliest satisfaction in seeing your Reverence in the midst of this humble town, and they hope that your Reverence’s presence in this humble and much-honored town may be the happy forerunner of peace, the occasion of concord, and the omen of endless happiness—” but presently he collected himself a little, and could disentangle the thoughts that lay accumulated in his mind, and he went on :

“How happy are we who live far from the scandals and intrigues of the great world, where corruption and irreligion hold their sway. What comes to our ears horrifies us. Don Juan prophesied it in his celebrated discourse on the fires of

Nineveh; and those fires of Nineveh, which have already fallen on France, will fall too on Catholic Spain and burn her up and it shall be said of her, '*Periit memoria ejus cum sonitu.*' Religion had already cooled some time since, but now-a-days it is completely lost in most minds, and those who remain capable of guiding their souls to Heaven are persecuted and threatened by the brutal mob of philosophers and revolutionaries. The men who govern the country make a public profession of atheism, mock at the Sacred Mysteries, scoff at the Virgin Mary, disparage the character of Christ, call the saints dolls and are ready to demolish our churches and profane our altars. The ministers of religion find themselves in the most precarious condition, they are treated worse than thieves and murderers, and divine worship is conducted without splendor or even decency, in a way that is sad to contemplate, by reason of the general poverty of the Church. Men think of nothing but of saving money, and of wrangling among themselves for the upperhand in governing the country; they have ceased to be guided by a Christian policy, and as the only possible rule of government is that of Christ, they are rushing swiftly on dissolution and total ruin."

Don Silvestre, while he was speaking, never

took his eyes off Don Juan de Lantigua, as if asking him, "Am I doing it right?" But the illustrious lawyer was the only person who did not express himself enthusiastically at the close of the address, perhaps because he regarded it as neither new nor appropriate—for every occasion does not serve for the utterance of certain truths. Doctor Sedeño, also made a few brilliant remarks on the evil state of the times, but in spite of their value they have not been handed down to us.

"Yes, the times are evil," said his Reverence, addressing himself chiefly to the priest and to Barrabás who was much annoyed but did not speak a word—"and still, God will not abandon His chosen people in the midst of the storm that beats round them, nor will the ark be lacking for those who are faithful to Him. Let us pray in all sincerity, my friends! Prayer is the heaven-sent antidote against the epidemic of sin which lurks around us; let us pray for ourselves, and for those who shut their ears to the voice of God, and their eyes to the light of truth. Constant fervor and piety in the faithful few may still draw down upon earth the special favors of Heaven. *Te, Domine, custodies nos a generatione hac in æternum.*"

Having reached this point, the prelate fixed his eyes with extreme benevolence on the young lay-

man he had brought with him, and presenting him to his friends he added :

“ This is one of our heroic youths, our valiant soldiers. Gentlemen, my excellent friends, bow to the deserving champion of good principles, of religious faith, of the Catholic Church—the foe of philosophers, of atheism and of all revolutionary ribaldry. All honor to the young when they are believers—devout, full of faith and of love for the Catholic cause.”

Don Rafael del Horro bowed modestly, stammered an unintelligible protest as to the merits attributed to him.

“ As to the young men of the present day,” added the Bishop, “ they abandon themselves to free-thinking and corrupt their minds with pernicious reading, and then they aspire to the honorable title of soldiers of Christ! The Church is prepared, however, whenever it is challenged, to defend itself! Gentlemen, what I say is not mere empty compliment, but admiration for his valiant spirit, for the constancy with which he combats, pursues, and castigates materialism, both by his oratorical eloquence and his vigorous literary style, and takes up everything that has proved to be a powerful defence of the sacred cause in the period we are passing through.”

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time
mentioned

Don Juan Amarillo made a pompous bow to the young man. "We knew already," said he, "that this gentleman was a great orator and journalist."

Don Silvestre embraced Rafael del Horro with much effusion. They were old friends, and on a certain occasion when the young editor had required a good correspondent at Ficóbriga the priest had undertaken to fulfil this task, and had written certain highly-spiced letters which left nothing to be desired. While all these compliments were passing Don Bartolomé Barrabás, who was the demagogue of the place, dared not utter a word in favor of his reprobate opinions, and even when the priest and Amarillo let fall a few pungent jests at the expense of the village philosopher, he thought it prudent not to bring out the well-sharpened lances of his rhetoric. Respect for Don Angel set a seal upon his lips; and the worthy prelate rewarded his reserve, for when Don Silvestre made a direct allusion to him, saying that Ficóbriga even was tainted and had its demagogue, the Bishop replied:

"Do not attack Don Bartolomé; I hope to convert him, for his heart is in the right place, and this passing frenzy will not lose his soul, if it is taken in time."

Barrabás bowed his thanks, and for the sake

of saying something he added: "And according to the papers Don Rafael del Horro has been busy with the elections."

"Has toiled and has triumphed," said the priest smoothly. "Matters will be different now to what they were last time, when through our negligence and indifference you got the upper-hand of us." And then, pointing to Barrabás with a sweep of his right hand, he added: "Then shall they say: '*Exurgat Deus et dissipentur inimici ejus, et fugiant. . . . Sicut fluit cera a facie ignis, sic periant peccatores a facie Dei.*'"

Don Bartolomé bowed again, and said laughing: "The voting will decide."

The demagogue was not on the list of guests at dinner that day, but Don Angel begged him to stay, which greatly pleased Barrabás; and at the same moment Don Juan went to the door and called out:

"Gloria, Gloria, my child; are we to have no dinner to-day?"

CHAPTER X.

DON ANGEL, BISHOP OF TRESESTRELLAS.

THE Bishop was just a grown-up child. His plump and rosy features with their constant gentle smile were framed, as it were, between his flowing episcopal robes and the brim of his green sombrero, radiant of spiritual joy, benevolence, perfect peace of conscience and a happy frame of mind towards God and man. He was one of those men who, by the simple impulse of a healthy nature, are prepared to take good for granted in all that surrounds them. His studies, and his experience in the confessional had taught him that there was wickedness in the world; still, whenever he had been talking to any one, he would always say: "What a good soul! What an excellent fellow!"

Just as a lamp throws its light on all that come near it his warm bright spirit radiated goodness on to all who approached him. He was incapable of harboring an evil thought of any one whom he knew, and when he heard of the iniquities of those whom he did not know, he never failed to say something in defence of the absent.

His intellect was perhaps inferior to that of his brother Don Juan, who was in fact a remarkable man; but he was his superior in genuine piety and sweetness of character; and even with regard to matters of dogma he held the doctrine of intolerance of error in its purely theological sense and not in the vulgar acceptation of that misused word; his keen compassion for all the failings and shortcomings of humanity seemed to temper the severity of his opinions. What Don Angel might have done if he could have held in the hollow of his hand the whole mass of modern society with its vices and heresies, it is impossible to say; as to Don Juan, it is quite certain that he would have flung it unhesitatingly into the fire and have enjoyed afterwards a perfectly quiet conscience—indeed a sense of satisfaction at having done a good deed.

In his religious practice Don Angel was impeccable; impossible to accuse him either of indifference or of excess of zeal. He never flagged in his duties as a Catholic, never let himself be led away by extravagant subtleties, or elaborate symbolism. In his hours of leisure he refreshed his mind by pious reading and eschewed newspapers of whatever party. At Ficóbriga, as his medical advisers recommended a quiet life and that he

should avoid reading and mental effort, he loved to walk in the garden, looking at the variety of fine flowers, and learning from his niece the time and conditions of their growth and blossoming. He liked too, to walk through the town and down to the sea, frequently walking on the shore or the quays, where he would linger to watch the fishermen's boats come in; and their return to harbor always filled him with an ineffable sentiment of delight and wonder at the infinite goodness of God. His eyes would detect them far on the horizon, follow them across the sea, and when they had come to land, he took particular pleasure in seeing them unload their cargo of sardines, haddock and sea-bream. He was always equally astonished at their having caught so many fishes, and would say to the boatmen: "I should have thought there could be none left after all you caught yesterday. Blessed be the Lord who will not leave the poor to perish!"

He was fond of music, be it what it might, making no distinction of school or style. Good and bad music had no meaning for him; to him it was all good, and whenever Gloria played the piano he listened with delight and even with a vague respect, for the rapid excursions of her fingers over the notes seemed to him the height of

human dexterity. The rhythm would take possession of his ear, and in the morning as he wandered about the garden, after having said mass in the Abbey church or in the house chapel when it was repaired, he would hum some tuneless air between his teeth much to his own satisfaction. But his chief pleasure was in discussing with his niece some definite subject, sacred or profane. He would authorize her kindly to say whatever occurred to her, question her concerning a thousand trifles which could have no real interest for him, and comment on the various events that occurred in Ficóbriga—for events do occur even in Ficóbriga.

He held his secretary, the reverend Doctor Lopez Sedeño, in such high esteem that he never set hand to any serious matter without consulting him, for Sedeño was an eminent theologian and very learned in canon law; still, from time to time the secretary had shown himself too much devoted to political affairs, reading the papers with eager attention, and even writing for them to some small extent. Though Don Angel was averse to this in principle, he had soon grown used to it, and ended by approving it, declaring that the times required all to bear arms who could. There were indeed certain malicious persons in the anterooms of the episcopal palace who grumbled—in whispers—at

the unbounded influence of Doctor Sedeño in his Reverence's council chamber, and there were some who dubbed this faithful friend and servant '*le petit Antonelli*.' But we need not trouble ourselves with these petty individuals—who may indeed have been maligned. It was said too, that Sedeño was ambitious and haughty, and aspired himself to the See of Tresestellas when Don Angel should be translated—as was rumored—to a more important one, and receive the Cardinal's hat. Of all this we know nothing, and we will shut our ears to the squabbles of the chapter.

It is certain that Don Angel was absolutely adored by the priests of his diocese and by his fellow-natives of Ficóbriga; that his soul was free from ambition, and that if the perversity of the times occasioned him much trouble it was only from the spiritual point of view. He was very much attached to Rafael del Horro, that young knight of the Church—as a sort of lay apostle—an energetic defender of catholicism and of the rights of the ecclesiastical body. Nevertheless, when, in the train, the excited and eager young fellow had been talking of the business of the election, his Reverence had replied:

“I believe that my fellow-townsmen will vote for you, because they are good Catholics and will

support the defenders of the Church, still do not ask me to speak to them on the subject. Come to an understanding with their friend Don Silvestre, who is said to be a master-mind in this matter of elections; those that he has managed have been famous throughout the country.”

On this point not even Doctor Sedeño—for all that he was *le petit Antonelli*—could shake the immovable determination of his Lordship the Bishop. However, he did interfere in another small matter of business which had brought Don Rafael to Ficóbriga, recommending him without hesitation to the care and regard of his brother Don Juan.

CHAPTER XI.

A SERIOUS BUSINESS.

RAFAEL DEL HORRO lived with his friend the curé, and every day either at breakfast or at dinner, he presented himself at Lantigua's house, attracted by the desire of talking to Gloria.

One morning, before this valiant champion of the faith had made his appearance, Don Angel who, with Gloria had just returned from the Abbey

where he had been celebrating mass, said to his niece:

“Your father is in the garden and wishes to speak to you—go to him.”

Gloria ran down to the garden, where she found Don Juan standing with his hands behind his back, inspecting the building materials which had been brought for repairing the chapel. They went together to a seat in a side walk shaded by thick magnolias and other trees. The low sun warmed the air and brought into the garden the whole convocation of the republic of birds from the immediate neighborhood, popping in and out on every side with much chirping and bustle. Don Juan looked affectionately at his daughter and began:

“It is out of my tender love for you my child that I want to inform you of a matter which seriously affects your future life and happiness. If I had to deal with a young girl devoid of that sound judgment and good sense which characterizes you, my course would at once be clear; but you are not one of those, and I prefer the plainest and shortest words. I think my child that a good opportunity offers for your marrying.”

Gloria sat in silent amazement; she wished to speak but could think of nothing important enough

to be said on so critical an occasion, or worthy of the impressive and majestic demeanor of Don Juan, in whose person she then felt the united presence of her father and her uncle.

“Yes,” he went on, “an affair which with some women is one of much difficulty, is in this instance a very simple problem that can be easily solved to the credit and satisfaction of all concerned. A young girl who has not spent her early years in improper intrigues or silly flirtations over balconies and in drawing-rooms, is the pride and treasure of a respectable family. You are such a young girl. Your amiable and docile temper, your truly christian education and modest manners, your ideas which, though they were at one time too ambitious and bold, you have since brought under the yoke of authority—all move me to address you in this manner, with the certainty that your views will agree with mine and that you will feel as I feel.”

Again Gloria longed to say something though without expressing her full agreement; but nothing would come into her head that was at all adequate to the gravity of the occasion, so she thought it prudent to hold her tongue.

“How grave you look!” continued her father, “and how pale. Well, I would rather see you so. A bold and frivolous girl would have smiled and

IF

THIS IS HOW A GIRL SHOULD BE

have said a dozen stupid or foolish things, while you understand that the matter is serious—a pious union for life, a sacrament instituted by God, and altogether the most difficult and delicate step in life; why the mere idea of putting out her foot to take it is enough to plunge the soul of a religious woman in the deepest reflection.” He smiled and then went on: “No doubt you already suspect who the man must be whom I consider best fitted to be your husband. There is a young man whose character, whose remarkable talents, and truly christian temper, make him a brilliant exception among the other men of his class and age, as you are an exception among the girls of the present day; and this young man—need I name him? is Don Rafael del Horro. In fact, if he were not as conspicuous for his virtue as for his talents, he would have addressed himself to you, and have turned your head with nonsensical speeches out of novels opposed to all christian doctrine, and which even where their purpose is good cannot fail to sow the seeds of vice and immorality in the soul. Judicious, sensible, virtuous and respectful, alike to you and to us, he has refrained from all impassioned demonstrations. Both in Madrid and here he has confided to me that he feels for you a pure and holy devotion, and that he shall esteem him-

self happy if you allow him to bear the name of your husband."

Gloria, more incapable than ever of uttering a single word, was tracing horizontal lines on the ground with the point of her parasol.

"If there were any need my dear to enumerate Rafael's merits," continued Don Juan, "I might tell you that of all the men I know there is not one who charms me more by the soundness of his opinions, the enthusiasm with which he has dedicated his youth to the defence of a cause which the evil-minded are always ready to persecute, by his honorable industry and punctuality—all of them qualities which rarely adorn one so young but rather men of discreet and mature age, who have learnt the ways of the world through the labor of years." Gloria, having finished drawing horizontal lines on the ground, was now adding perpendicular lines forming chequers with the first.

"During the last few weeks Rafael has acquired the esteem and gratitude of all of us who had suffered persecution. His talents and his courage in resisting, single-handed, all the enemies and persecutors of the Church have reminded me of Judas Maccabeus, but that he fought with the sword and Rafael with the tongue and pen. What a series of triumphs does the Church owe to him

in its temporal affairs! what eternal gratitude he deserves from the poor and persecuted priests who could not go into the dens of heresy to defend themselves nor allow the cathedral to become a scene of blasphemies. Still, as truth needs a voice in every sphere, in that of this lower world of strife the Church has a good many pious journals to defend and protect her, and make a firm rampart against the threats of the impious."

"A mob of rascals!" said Gloria, who seeing here at last an opening for saying something, would not miss the opportunity.

"Sometimes their hearts are not so black as their words," said Don Juan. "Nevertheless Rafael has treated them as they deserve.—Poor young man! when he confessed to me, most respectfully, the chaste devotion that you have inspired him with I was greatly rejoiced. 'Since my daughter has no idea of being a nun'—said I—'in you she may find her companion for life,' but I did not choose to answer him till I knew what you thought about the matter."

But Gloria still traced bars in the dust.

"My notions on the matter, my child, are that marriage should only follow a free choice of the heart, subject to the advice of older persons. Still, though I allow for such advice and in some cases

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even for due opposition to an unsuitable affection on a young girl's part, I altogether disallow all violence or constraint in order that a father's choice—sometimes a very doubtful one—may be successful. This must always be the cause of an unhappy and immoral union. If after duly considering Rafael's rare good qualities you feel no inclination to marry him, I shall neither persuade nor coerce you. If you have never thought much about him and are indifferent—which I believe to be the case—a suitable delay will reveal to you the treasures of his good and honest heart. Do not mistake the vehement raptures of a day for that calm devotion which will last through a lifetime, a reflected light from that pure and trustful love we feel towards God.”

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Gloria finished off the pattern she had traced, adding little arrow-heads at the four corners; then raising her eyes from the elaborate geometrical design to her father's face, she said timidly.

“Very well, papa, I will always do just as you bid me.”

“But if I bid you nothing!” exclaimed Lantigua hastily. “I see you are not prepared to give me a final and categorical answer. That is a proof of good feeling and good sense. Such things require consideration.”

"Yes, consideration," exclaimed Gloria, clutching at the idea as a shipwrecked man clings to a plank.

"Very well," said Don Juan rising. "Take as much time as you like for consideration, my child. You have good sense, feeling, piety and faith enough to bring you to a fitting decision. We will pause there?"

"Yes, wait a little."

"Still, I should wish you not to delay your decision too long."

"I will decide soon."

"I will give you three days—come, four. This shows me, as I said before, that you are not used to having a lover. Has Rafael said anything to you?"

"A little—but only in jest—I have always taken it as a jest."

"This time it is in good earnest; so now my little girl prepare your answer. Consider it well. Neither your consent nor your refusal can diminish your father's fondness.—Good-bye for the present, I have work to do. I only charge you, as usual, take care that there is no noise to disturb me."

"Be easy on that point, papa."

Don Juan shut himself into his room and sank into the ocean of his books as a diver plunges into

the sea. Till dinner-time, his very existence was to be ignored.

CHAPTER XII.

THE OTHER ONE.

DON JUAN'S discourse had left Gloria in the greatest perplexity. The subject was in truth a grave one, and it could not be put before her in this way without seriously occupying her mind. For a long time her reflections were so absorbing that she lost all sense of the flight of the hours. At last, with a deep sigh, she raised her head, as if she could not come to a decision. The garden was perfectly empty and still, and the heat of the sun, which now stood high in the heavens, had increased considerably. All the shutters were closed in the house, and not a sound was to be heard in it; the very birds were silent, excepting where two or three were twittering their secrets or settling some dispute in the topmost boughs of the plane-trees.

Gloria rose, for the painful excitation of her nerves prompted her to walk while she thought. Soothed by the silence and solitude around her,

she went towards a pretty and sequestered arbor; the rapidity of her walk and the anxiety with which, as she approached the sheltered spot, she glanced round at the thickness of the shrubs might have made a spectator fancy that some one awaited her there—but there was no one; the copse was wholly deserted. Then she went up to the boundary hedge and looked out into the road through the spaces left by the tangled foliage of the honeysuckle; her eyes were fixed, her face pale and her long eyelashes fluttered and trembled like butterflies playing in the light. Any one who could have seen her in this attitude and noted the interest with which her eyes explored the road, first downwards towards the sea and then up towards the mountains, must have fancied she was watching for some one. Nevertheless, I am in a position to swear—and I swear it—no one was coming; no one ever had come who had the smallest hold upon her heart.

Presently she went up to her room and sat down to some needle-work. She continued to think, but the slightest sounds made her start and turn her head. The whisper of a falling leaf, the steps of the gardener on the gravel, the clatter of the empty watering-pots as they were set down, the water as it splashed in the basin full of gold-

fish, the cooing of the doves at the top of the loft of the old house, the distant whistle of a steam-boat starting from the quay—all struck her ear and vibrated in her brain as keenly as though they had been beloved voices calling to her by her name in so many distinct spots of infinite space. And yet no one called; neither from the garden, nor from the empty air above, nor from the sea below, nor was there even a voice heard by her ear alone. Her heart beat violently to a rapid rhythm—foot-steps seemed to echo to its throbbing.

Gloria de Lantigua was in a singular state of mind. Her reason had nothing to object to her father's project, and was ready and free to recognize in Rafael all the qualities of a young man of sound sense, of an honorable and amiable character, of a champion of catholicism, of an indefatigable worker, a secular apostle. Acknowledging all this, she made every effort to discover in her bosom some strong liking for the man himself; but what enhanced the difficulty was that an intrusive shade would persistently come between him and her fancy—a shade rising from she knew not whence. This would seem to point to the inference that the young lady had already met with the choice of her heart; but a long course of inquiries, carried on with the assistance of the most inquisitive of her

neighbors in Ficóbriga, prove the contrary. Terésita la Monja, Don Juan de Amarillo's wife, in whose house there was a little window from which her sharp eyes could command and rake the garden, court-yards and alleys of the Lantiguas' house, declares that if Gloria had ever received a lover no bigger than a bean, or had a letter, or talked over the balcony, it could not have escaped her knowledge. And witness to the same effect is borne by the two daughters of Don Bartolomé; who were both well-informed persons as to the news of the town and on intimate terms with Francisca Pedrezuela, our heroine's worthy housekeeper.

And yet *the other one* must be somewhere; but where? Who was he?

Very late after dinner Gloria went alone down into the garden, and as she walked she spoke—without moving her lips it is true—she spoke for us and we will listen.

“It is folly,” she said. “Madness that possesses me; madness to think of a man who does not exist, to let my head be turned and my heart ache for an imaginary person. Away with such nonsense, vain illusions and mute dialogues. I am perhaps not quite well, and my brain is gone wrong no doubt. I am living in a delusion, dreaming of impossibilities, of a being who neither exists nor

ever can exist on earth. How else can it be that, of all the men I have seen and heard and known, not one resembles him? Ah! and if my father or my uncle knew him they would not speak in such praise of Don Rafael.

“ But how should they know him if he does not exist, if he is nowhere to be found, if he has neither bodily substance, life, nor reality? I am mad, utterly mad. Leave me—you—and never return. Be silent—you—and speak to me no more for I will not hear. It was a lie—less substantial than a shade, than a dream, than a sunbeam! a fancy and nothing more. Not only do you not exist, you never could exist for you would be perfection. Go, leave this garden and never return; never speak to me, never call me in the silence of the night, never pass by rustling the dry and withered autumn leaves where they lie.—Farewell—you! You have been courteous to me, full of delicacy and generosity, loyal, passionate without insulting me, and loving though treating me with sacred respect;—and yet I must drive you away for my father desires me to love this Don Rafael—an excellent fellow, a worthy young man, as he says. No doubt there is no better to be found in this world, and to believe in you, and dream of you is as wild as it would be to raise my hand to pluck at a star.

“Well! everything has its proper sphere. In heaven are the sun and the stars, and on earth men and worms.—Let us be content to crawl and not to soar. My father has told me again and again that if I do not clip the wings of my fancy I shall come to misfortune. Out with the scissors. I must either resist or yield—live in the world of reality or the world of dreams. My dear father and master, you are right to lead me into this road; guided by so faithful a hand I will enter on it with confidence and marry this true soldier of Christ.”

Presently she went on to remember that when a school-girl is condemned to bread and water for not knowing her lessons it becomes a necessity to amuse herself in her solitude with foolish fancies, her mind fixed on imaginary lovers and impassioned scenes beautified by innocent fancy. She told herself that such follies were unworthy of a person of such serious character and principles as herself, and though her unspotted conscience, clear and translucent as the sky above her, showed her no tinge of impropriety, it told her that in these constant aberrations of fancy there was no small taint of sin, or at least of temptation. Then she laughed at herself, and once more fixing her thoughts upon her father, she felt so touched by his kindness, his foresight, his upright judgment,

that it increased the admiration and love she already felt for him; and then, by a natural concatenation, her thoughts after all these extravagant wanderings returned to the person of Don Rafael.

“What a thoroughly good fellow he is!” she said as she went towards the house. “I was a fool not to perceive his merits sooner. He might be taken for a much older man; and then what talents Heaven has bestowed on him. He thinks nothing of turning the tables on all the abominable revolutionaries and demolishing them with his arguments. And what powers of language! I remember well a speech in which he said: ‘You are trampling under foot all laws human and divine! You are insulting the Deity!’ And then he is pious, he is religious, he does not share that spirit of free-thought which disgraces the young men of the present day—ah!—I hear him coming—I must fly.”

And she hastily escaped through one door while the model young man entered by another.

CHAPTER XIII.

IT RAINS.

THIS revulsion of feeling did not last long in Gloria. Just as the electric current courses through the globe her ideas could not avoid their determined path.

“No,” she said, “no, I cannot care for that man. There is something in him that repels me without my knowing what.”

That evening, being the 23rd of June, St. John's eve, they all went to the Abbey. Don Angel went over every part of it, to see the repairs done to some of the altars, some new dresses which had been dedicated to the use of the Virgin, and the ornaments of silver recently purchased by subscription, by the faithful of Ficóbriga. He examined it all carefully and pronounced his opinion on each piece with much acumen. After a short prayer they went out for a walk. In the porch his Reverence said:

“We will go down to the sea-shore if it is agreeable to you all.”

Don Juan, Sedeño, Rafael and the parish priest agreed with much pleasure.

"We shall see the boats come in," said the curé, screening his eyes with his hand to look out to sea. "There will be a good haul of sardines to-day; hallo! but the sea is very rough!"

"Shall we have a storm?" asked Don Angel.

The Priest looked round at the sky and the horizon, and seemed to sniff the air while studying the face of the weather.

"We shall have a storm this evening," he said throwing back his long priest's cloak, a garment which he found most inconvenient, though he could do no less than wear it in the society of the Bishop.

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed the prelate in mock dismay. "Gentlemen will you continue your walk in a deluge?"

"Don Silvestre," said Don Juan, "is more weather-wise than the best barometer ever constructed."

Romero pointed to the north-east where a flattish hill sloped down to the sea, known as la Cotera de Fronilde.

"That is an infallible sign," he said. "The hill is capped with red clouds and the proverb never fails which says: '*Fronilde frowns and Ficóbriga drowns.*'"

"Still the sun is very hot," observed the Bishop.

“Another sign that it will rain soon, my Lord.”

“Well let us decide—shall we or shall we not go down to the shore?”

“What is there to fear?” said Don Juan. “Are you coming Gloria?”

His daughter, during these meteorological observations, had found herself obliged to answer various questions put by young del Horro and to listen to the studied phrases which concealed, under the guise of small talk, a distinct purpose of love-making.

“Are you coming Gloria?” repeated Don Juan.

“No,” said the girl, “I wish to pray and I am going back into the church.” Rafael’s face darkened like the cloud-capped hill.

“I will grant you a dispensation from that duty for this evening,” said Sedeño politely and with a certain air of gallantry.

“No, no, let her go, let her say her prayers!” said Don Angel.—“Don Rafael oblige me with your arm.”

Gloria went back into the Abbey and the rest set out on their walk across a stony common which extended from the back of the church down to the sea-shore; Don Angel walking in front and leaning on the young orator and journalist—an

image of the Church supported by youthful valor and enthusiasm.

Beyond this green slope the sea lay spread before them; two or three smacks were scudding across it towards the bar, their white sails set like wings, and far, very far away, on the very ocean's rim where sea and sky met, a black streak darkened the intense blue.

"A steam-boat," remarked the Bishop.

"It is only passing at a distance," said Romero.

As he spoke the sun vanished behind a cloud and left them in comparative gloom.

"It would seem that our reverend friend's prophecy is about to be fulfilled, here at any rate," said Don Angel. "We are left without any sunshine though it is clear out there. It will blow over."

"We shall have rain," said the walking barometer.

Don Angel looked up to the sky, and as he looked a drop of water fell on the tip of his nose. Don Juan put out his hand and exclaimed: "Drops are falling."

"There it is already," said Don Angel also extending his hand. "We shall do best to go on and return home round by the custom-house. The distance is almost the same."

“Then let us get on!” said Don Silvestre opening his red umbrella and giving it to Rafael to hold over his lordship the Bishop. Don Juan also opened his; the drops fell faster. Suddenly a squall from the north-east swept violently down upon them, raising whirling columns of dust, for the soil was scarcely damp, and facing the party with such force as to oblige them to stop for a moment; the flowing robes of the Bishop, the priest and the secretary were dragged flapping round their persons as though the Wind wanted to snatch them away for his own use.

“Good Heavens! what is happening?” exclaimed the Bishop.

In a very few seconds the dark cloud had covered the whole face of the sky; the old poplars with their scaly trunks and rustling leaves, bowed and moaned, flinging their arms about with gestures of despair. The gale, after sweeping over all the roofs and tearing off every tile that was loose, flung itself with mad fury on the sea, it fretted the waves into deep hollows, roared through the tumbling cylinders and lashed away sheets of foam. The horizon had become invisible; sea, earth and sky were a vast blank of water and mist. Suddenly, a swift snake-like streak of blue fire flashed across space with a sharp quiver, as

some keen thought flashes through the brain, and then, far above them and yet close by, came the deep roar as of a thousand hills falling and crashing into ruin. The rain fell in torrents, a dense, thrashing down-pour, and they were wet to the skin in an instant; but Don Angel, turning to his friends only said with a voice and look of deep compassion: "The poor fishermen! The poor sailors?"

CHAPTER XIV.

'THE OTHER' IS AT HAND.

GLORIA had gone into the church again, well pleased to find herself alone and in a spot so fitted for giving the reins to her imagination. There were not more than five or six persons in the sacred building, among them Teresita la Monja, who was the last to leave, and two old sailors who came there every evening. Gloria went to the family chapel of the Lantiguas and seated herself in a corner where she could fix her eyes on the altar. The still atmosphere, the subdued light, and the silence seemed to her like an untroubled lake in whose depths her mind's eye could see her

soul reflected. It was a good opportunity for prayer, for seeing God face to face, and lifting up her thoughts to Him, for leaving in the sanctuary all of her trouble that could be left;—so thought Gloria.

In the church at Ficóbriga the chairs are very low with high backs serving the devout as a "*prie-dieu*." Gloria took one of these, and kneeling upon it, bent her face on the back, supporting her forehead with both hands; and then she indulged in meditation.

"Why can I not tear out this thing and fling it from me? My God! why is it that this presence—which is empty air, which has no existence, which never can exist—should fill my mind night and day to torment me and tempt me every hour? I will pray—I will pray with all my might." And she began to pray with her lips. Still her thoughts would not go whither her will commanded them, and as the compass points ever to the north, so her mind dwelt on the thing she fancied. No human power could divert it.

"It is madness, it is madness!" murmured the girl, raising her head.

She shut her eyes and covered her face, and a voice inside her seemed to say: "I see you! you are there—I can touch you!" The poor child

was seized with a sense of breathless anticipation that was perfect anguish; her heart seemed to expand and contract at every pulsation; there, in the very depths of her being, lurked a sense of revelation, of obscure prevision which she could not account for. She seemed to hear footsteps; but with the ears of her spirit, as if some mysterious gift of divination assured her of the approach of some one of paramount interest to herself. She seemed to see a gleam which gradually dawned through the increasing darkness, announcing the advent of some glorious light; while a solemn voice seemed to whisper within: "My soul—it will soon be day!" Suddenly she opened her eyes and was struck with alarm. She glanced at the arched vaults above her and saw how dark it was, though not more than five o'clock. The original stone-work of the old church, a Romanesque structure of the XII century, had been profanely disfigured by a coating of plaster under which emblematic figures on the capitals and in the niches were almost invisible; they seemed to have shrunk with cold, all wrapped in coarse white grave-clothes. Many of the arches had, in the course of so many long years, lost their original curve and the sharpness of their mouldings; many battered windows made wry faces, many columns had

ceased to be vertical and seemed to be bowing to each other with ceremonious solemnity; the whole aspect of the place impressed the spectator as sad and forlorn.

Gloria, overcome by sudden terror, rose hastily from her knees; at that moment a terrific blow was dealt as it seemed on the roof above her, and the whole building struggled and trembled in the violent clutch of the gale, which did its utmost to tear it from its foundations. Furious gusts burst in at the open arches and swept through the aisles with a terrible trumpet blast, searching the whole church, overturning the benches, whisking the dust off the altars and disarranging the gorgeous vestments of the saints. A lamp was flung down and in its fall broke a glass case or sepulchre containing a figure of the dead Christ. A long branch of artificial flowers lashed the face of St. John, and the sword was wrenched from St. Michael's hand, and tossed into a confessional. The gale howled round the organ, rousing an echo from its pipes, and rapidly turned over the leaves of the book on the desk, as with the fevered hand of an invisible reader. It roughly kissed Gloria on the forehead and then escaped through the doors, slamming them with such violence that they lost half of their worm-eaten panels.

Gloria was now quite terrified, for the church was in total darkness and not a living soul remained in it. As she came out of the side chapel, she fancied she heard steps—she began to run, and some one ran behind her. Certainly she heard a footstep and a voice saying: “Wait—it is I—I have come!”

Her panic increased, and with it her desire to fly; she went from one chapel to another, and was on the point of shrieking out for help. The very altar pieces looked as if they were moving and she could fancy the saints were calling to each other!

At last she was able to control herself; she tried to be calm, and made herself look behind the pillars and on all sides with a resolute attention which soon dispelled her absurd fancies. Still she could not completely recover her presence of mind; and her heart shrunk and shivered within her like a sensitive plant when it is touched. Gloria felt as if an invisible hand was laid upon it.

“How nervous I am!” she said to herself, trying to shake off her alarm.

At this moment she heard the merry voice of a child, and out of the door of the sacristy there came running towards her one of the sacristan’s little boys.

“Sildo, Sildo,” she called, “Come here.”

“What you! Señorita,” exclaimed the child going up to her.

“Come here—give me your hand.”

“I am going to bolt the doors for such a wind has got up.—Do you wish to go out?”

“No, it seems to be raining too hard. I will wait in the sacristy.” Sildo led her thither.

CHAPTER XV.

HE IS COMING.

“Is your father there?”

“Yes Señorita; he is fixing a board to mend the paupers’ bier.”

Gloria entered the sacristy which was gloomy and damp, and crossed a strip of court-yard covered with grass; from this she stepped into a tumble-down dwelling, with no less than three stories, while the walls showed the mangled remains of a Byzantine arch all daubed over with plaster; it was in fact patched up out of the ruins of the old abbot’s palace and served as a residence for the parish sexton. The room she entered was full of a medley of things in disorderly heaps. It was at once the warehouse, the carpen-

ter's shop, the living-room and bedroom of Caifás and his children. Tall candlesticks made of wood, silvered over and covered with the guttering of yellow wax-candles, stuck up, like legs in the air, above a black mass of funeral gear. A figure of Saint Peter, without any hands—and consequently without his keys—lifted his bald head, crowned with the gilt nimbus, from a heap of shavings and laths. Painted canvases, like the curtain of a theatre, or fragments of church decorations for Holy-week, were nailed up to a beam to serve as a screen to that part of the room in which the three children slept, and the wooden frame of an old cupboard without a back contained some cracked pipkins, broken jars and a skull and a book carved in wood, formerly the property of the image of some holy anchorite. There was no chair nor other article of furniture of any description intended for sitting on, unless the carpenter's bench might serve the purpose. When Gloria went in, Caifás was hammering at the black boards of the paupers' bier, fitting a piece into the bottom of it. At each blow the hideous structure, which lay bottom upwards, seemed to give a groan.

“What a terrific storm!” said Gloria as she came into the workshop.

“Señorita Gloria!” exclaimed Caifás, grinning

with delight, "the rain has caught you and kept you in the church; shall I send to the priest's house for an umbrella?"

"No, I will wait here till the rain stops. They will come from our house to fetch me," said Gloria, glancing round to find a place where she could sit down.

"Alack, child of my heart! This is a perfect Babel! There is not a seat fit for a decent person. Take a seat in that niche for the Virgin. If you are not uncomfortable in it, you might be put, seat and all, on the altar and no offence to God either!"

Gloria sat down and Caifás after a few more blows announced that the job was finished.

"There—that is done," said he. "Now the wind will not blow in so cold on the poor creatures as we take them to be buried. The bottom had come out, and the day before yesterday, when we were carrying the body of poor old Gaffer Fulastre one of his arms came through the broken side. As it happened just as we were passing the house of Don Juan Amarillo and it seemed to shake its fist at it, the people said that old Fulastre was defying Don Juan to meet him at the day of judgment."

Gloria was not at ease. The horrible disorder

of the place and the aspect of the dismal apparatus were not calculated to relieve the disquietude of a spirit so tormented as hers.

“What fearful weather!” she said, looking out at the patch of leaden sky which was visible through the window. “How many boats must have been lost this day!”

“The Lord sends us nothing but misfortunes,” said Caifás with a deep sigh. “I cannot think how any one can care to live; a pretty business life is! It is true that we were not given our choice—”

“Be patient”—interrupted Gloria. “There are others much worse off than you are.”

Caifás who was squatting on the floor raised his eyes to the gentle girl seated in the saint's niche above him. The whole picture was an exact reproduction of those in which some sinful mortal is represented as praying at the feet of the Virgin Mary. Only the dress destroyed the illusion; between the small blinking eyes, the coarsely-cut features, the bent figure and sallow coloring of José Mundideo—known to all Ficóbriga by the nickname of Caifás—and the engaging beauty and sweetness of Gloria, there was as great a gulf as between the misery of this world and the glory of Heaven.

The sexton drew a deep breath and heaved a

sigh that might have filled the Abbey; then huddling himself up again he said:

“Patient! aye! is there any patience left in the world I wonder! I thought I had pretty well used up the whole stock. Indeed, if it were not for a few charitable souls like you *Señorita*, what would become of me and my poor children?”

Mundideo’s three little ones seemed to confirm their father’s assertion, and stood contemplating the young lady with a fixed, adoring stare. They were two boys and a scrap of a girl; she, absorbed in admiration of the *Señorita*, was gradually edging closer to her, and with her grubby little pink fingers—like rose-leaves grimed with mud—she softly touched Gloria’s gloves and the edge of her mantle, and would have extended her investigations but that her feeling of reverence checked her. Sildo, the eldest wiped away the dust from the seat Gloria occupied and from everything near her, while Paco, the second, tried to arrange in perfect order the threads in the tassel of her parasol which hung within his reach.

Gloria pulled out her purse; “I have given you nothing this week,” she said; “here.”

“Blessed be the hand of God!” cried José, taking six little silver coins which she held out to him. “You see children, God does not forsake us.

Ah, it is a mercy that every one is not so stony-hearted as his reverence Don Silvestre."

"Why—what does he say?"

"Señorita Gloria," answered Caifás wiping away a tear with the sleeve of his coat. "After the first of the next month I shall no longer eat the bitter bread I earn from the parish. His reverence the curé is turning me off."

"Turning you off?"

"Yes; he says he is turning me away for my disgraceful conduct—because I have many debts and cannot pay them—because I am a swindler and a villain, and a miserable wretch—and he is right. I am not fit to have to do with these sacred places. I am a swindler, I am eaten up with debt, I have pawned everything but the shirt I have on and I owe Don Juan Amarillo more than my weight in silver—I shall soon go to prison and then before the judge and then to the gallows, which is all I am fit for."

"Good Heaven! José, you frighten me!" cried Gloria trying to soothe the children who, seeing their father cry, had begun to do the same. "If all you say is true you must be a very wicked man."

"I am nothing more than stupid, ugly Caifás—Caifás the idiot as they call me—Caifás the unfortunate as I call myself."

“Francisca told me yesterday that on Sunday you were drunk.”

“Yes, Señorita—it is true. I got drunk—how can I explain to you, you will not understand; I doubted whether I should throw myself into the sea, or get drunk to sleep a few hours—to forget that I was Caifás and a horror to every one. Wine makes you jolly or it makes you sleepy. Dreams or jollity—both seem equally heavenly to a man who knows nothing of either.”

“Nay, nay—do not try to excuse yourself,” said Gloria in a tone of gentle admonition. “You are not good; I do not believe you are as wicked as you make out, but you are not good. The truth is that you have a horridly bad house and that your wife is enough to make a saint go wrong.”

“Oh my God! oh Holy Virgin!—oh Señorita!” said the poor wretch, in a tone that betrayed the fact that she had hit on the wound that rankled. “How on earth can I be good with that woman at my side? If only you could see her when she comes in at night, with her heart as foul as her face and her face as hard as her heart; all painted with red, and looking for all the world as if the devil had turned her out of doors! Down on the quays they think her a beauty and give

her drink, so she comes in jolly enough; then she beats me, takes my money, thrashes the children, scolds and screams or sings songs which are a scandal to the curé and all the neighbors. She is at the bottom of all my troubles—of my having not a chair to sit on, of all my clothes and furniture and bedding being in pawn, of my never having a réal, of my being on the point of being brought up before the judge by Don Juan Amarillo, and turned out of my place by his reverence. This is the state I am in—I Caifás, abandoned by God, and on the high-road to hell for that woman's sins."

~~“~~“You are an idiot”—said Gloria much provoked. “Why do you let yourself be tyrannized over by such a harpy?”

“I don't let myself be tyrannized over. At night we quarrel and I beat her. Still, even your wishing it will not help me to get out of the misery she has got me into. As I cannot pay my debts I shall be turned out of the sacristan's place, I shall have to beg and to go to prison. Nay, Señorita, I am afraid that this poor wretched Caifás cannot live much longer. I have a great mind to fling myself into the sea.—It must be very peaceful down there, quite at the bottom!”

“Miserable man!” exclaimed Gloria much

moved, "we will protect you. Do not doubt the goodness of God, José; do not think of suicide which is the worst sin of all; just you trust in God."

"When you tell me to trust, I feel I can almost do so. When I look at you, I feel as if evil were drawn out of me—and I am stronger to bear misfortune—God must have been very great when he made you Señorita Gloria. My life is as black and dingy as that coffin; then you come in; you only look at me and I could believe that flowers were springing from that bier. Yes, dear lady, when you are by I am another creature. I could worship you as a heavenly being that has helped me so often, so many, many times—who cured me when I was ill last year, who would not leave my children naked, who condescended to comfort me, honoring my wretched hovel with her presence—the only soul that has ever said to me 'Caifás you are not so bad as they say. Trust in God and have patience.'"

"You are mad!" said Gloria. "What does all this mean?"

"It means that you are an angel. Oh! if ever I find an opportunity of showing my gratitude. But what can I ever do? I am like a stone in the roadway, everyone treads me under foot."

“Come, come, do not think so much of my kindness which amounts to nothing,” said Gloria impatiently, and she glanced at the sky to see if it still were raining.

“Do not think of it? And am I not to think of the hand that gives me my daily bread? You are never out of my thoughts one single hour; I believe that I should forget myself and the salvation of my soul before forgetting you—my guardian angel. I feel as if you were my protecting saint, and I see you everywhere. Last night, *Señorita*, I dreamed of you.”

“Of me?” said Gloria smiling. “And what did you dream?”

“Something sad, yes very sad.”

“That I died?”

“Oh! no—but that you had forgotten me and my poor children, and cared no more about us.”

“That is strange. And what had made me forget you?”

“You were in love.” Gloria looked grave and colored slightly. “Yes—I dreamed a man had come.”

“A man?”

“Why, of course. Who should you fall in love with but a man? Yes—I saw him, and I see him still.”

“And what was he like?” said Gloria laughing.

“He was—how shall I describe him?—a dreadful, terrible man—”

“Good gracious!”

“No—you must understand; not horrible to look at—on the contrary very handsome—his face was only to be compared with that of our Lord Jesus.”

“Why then did he terrify you?” asked Gloria, giving more attention to this foolish matter than she felt that it deserved.

“Because he took you away, far, very far away,” said Caifás with all the emphasis of a narrator fully possessed by his subject.

“Caifás do not frighten me with these terrible and valiant lovers who carry me so far away. Stick to the simple fact.”

“Well, I dreamed he came flying through the air and that he fell from the clouds like a thunderbolt.”

“Come, come, that will do!” said Gloria. “You will make me as nervous as I was before with your rhodomontade. I was dreadfully nervous in the church this evening; José I was horribly frightened.”

Gloria rose as she spoke. “Do you know,”

she went on after looking out of doors "that the storm is as bad as ever. It is very strange that my father should not have sent any one to fetch me."

"It is strange," Caifás agreed. "Would you like me to go to tell them where you are, Señorita?"

"No, some one is sure to come. Papa means to send the carriage—but no; I remember that one of the mules was taken ill yesterday—but at any rate Roque should have come with an umbrella."

"I have a broken one;" said Mundideo, "still it would cover you. Would you like to go Señorita?"

"I will wait a little longer. I think they must come."

Some time passed and Gloria grew impatient.

"I am really getting anxious," she said. "It is almost night and no one has come to look for me. Something must have happened at home I am afraid."

"Would you like to go at once? We can get there and I think it rains rather less."

"Yes, the storm is giving way. Let us go at once and take advantage of this lull. What a state the streets are in!"

"It is not far."

Caifás brought out, from behind Saint Peter, a red umbrella and opened it in the room to see

what state it was in. It was certainly not in an encouraging condition for use in stormy weather ; the stuff had started away from the points of the ribs leaving them bare, and the unsewn gores flapped forlornly between them like the petals of a faded flower.

CHAPTER XVI.

HE IS COME.

“THAT will do,” said Gloria eagerly. “Let us be off.”

After giving the children all the small coin she had about her, the young lady and the sexton set out. Gloria picked up her skirts, Caifás carefully holding the umbrella so that his guardian angel should be as little wetted as possible and pointing out to her the puddles in the road and the stones which stood up, on to which she could step.

“I am quite anxious,” repeated Gloria. “What can have happened at home?”

Near the Abbey church but somewhat higher was the cemetery, enclosed by a thick wall of coarse rubble, which formed one side of the street leading to the town gate ; Gloria never passed it without a certain sense of pious regret.

“What a bad night for my poor little brothers, Caifás!” said she.

“They do not feel the cold as we do,” replied the sexton.

“That is true; but we are so constituted, we are so clogged by the earth we live on, that we cannot think of the soul without the body it wore.”

Suddenly there was a fresh blast from the north-east, so violent as to compel them to stand still. It turned the poor umbrella inside out and Caifás had the greatest difficulty in preventing it from being snatched out of his hands by the wind. A branch torn off by the hurricane was blown across quite close to Gloria’s face, and then the rain came down again lashing them furiously.

“God have mercy upon us!” exclaimed the terrified girl, and as she spoke a livid glare lighted up the town; Gloria saw a streak of fire which darted quivering down on to the roofs, and at that instant the thunder-clap echoed through the streaming atmosphere.

“The lightning has fallen,” cried Gloria in anguish. “Caifás, Caifás—do not you think it has struck our house?” She stood still, breathless with terror and staring towards the east, but in the blackness that succeeded the flash it was impossible to distinguish the buildings.

“It is in that direction, but much farther off. Do not be frightened Señorita, it has fallen somewhere on the coast.”

“Let us run Caifás. It half killed me with fright. I could have sworn it had struck our house—I am so stupidly nervous to-night.”

“It is the man,” said Caifás laughing. “The man who has dropped from the sky—the man I dreamed about.”

“Good God! are you drunk, José—will you hold your tongue? You see how nervous I am; you will make me ill.”

“Then I will hold my tongue.”

“Let us make haste—come; here we are at last. I see a light in my father’s window. Everything seems quiet.”

The night was very dark, but not so dark as to conceal the existence of a large pool of water formed by the rain in front of the Lantiguas’ house.

“This is a pretty state of things, Caifás—the plaza is a lake.”

“I will carry you over Señorita,” said Caifás preparing to carry his words into effect.

“No, no—that will not do. Round here, and by the side alley we can get into the old house. I think I can see that the great gates are open.”

It has already been said that the house con-

sisted in fact of two buildings, the old ancestral residence of the Lantiguas and the modern mansion built by the rich uncle from whom Don Juan had inherited it. The two were in fact one, both inside and out; but the older part only contained two or three habitable rooms. The rest were used as granaries and store-rooms, while on the ground-floor there was a good stable and coach-house. Gloria went in by the great gate of the old house, after thanking Mundideo warmly for his escort.

She hastily ran up the creaking stairs, crossed a long and empty corridor, and entered a large room which was now used to keep fruit in, and which contained empty sacks and chests and such lumber. This led into another room which adjoined the new part of the house and which was furnished as a bedroom.

Gloria opened the door and was excessively astonished to see a light in this room which was not at present used by any one. She went in and looked round, standing still and speechless with surprise for a few minutes. There was a man in the room.

He was lying at full length on the bed and covered with blankets, all but his head. On the table near him stood a candle. Gloria went up to the bed and looking at this head she saw a pale

and suffering face, marked here and there with livid bruises; the lips were parted, the eyes closed, the brows somewhat knit and the hair wet. The profile of this face was extraordinarily fine and the forehead, under the dark, disordered curls was fair and noble. From the straight brow, slightly arched towards the temples, started the line of an aquiline nose, as delicate and faultless as if it had been chiselled by a master-hand. A chestnut moustache and a beard which parted naturally below the chin into two points, added to the gravity and dignity of features which were as nearly as possible perfect. Gloria, in the brief space of her observation, irresistibly compared the face before her with that of the figure of the Saviour in the Abbey, enshrined in a glass case and wrapped in a winding sheet of the whitest and finest lawn.

But she had not had time to hazard any inferences, when the door on the side of the new house was opened, and with the greatest care to make no noise, Don Angel and Don Juan came in.

“Ah! You are here?” exclaimed Don Juan.
“How did you get in?”

“By the old gate.”

“I could not send to fetch you my child, for we have not had a moment's time to think even.— You see,” and he pointed to the man on the bed.

"We have had plenty to do, child," said the Bishop with some pride. "We have been well employed, and we have witnessed a deed of heroism?"

Gloria's looks asked for farther explanation.

"We have here—we have him safe—an unfortunate young man whom we have succeeded in saving from the fury of the waves. What a satisfaction, what a legitimate joy!"

"But we must not make a noise," said Don Juan. "The doctor says that there is nothing to fear; but he must be left to rest."

"And who is he?" asked Gloria.

"He is—our neighbor. What can it matter? Thank God that he should have allowed us to perform this act of charity!"

"Still it was Don Silvestre."

"Did Don Silvestre save him?"

"From the very midst of the waves my child. I am still agitated when I think of it. What an evening we have gone through! The poor shipwrecked creatures have been taken into the different houses in the town and he fell to us.—But you are drenched my child; go and change your clothes at once."

The man on the bed moved a little and murmured a few words in a language which neither of the three could understand.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE STEAMER PLANTAGENET.

WE must go back a few hours in our story.

After his Reverence the Bishop had made the observation before quoted: "Poor sailors!" the party of promenaders had done their utmost to reach, at any rate temporary shelter in the sheds of the custom-house. All lamented the mishap, and although Don Angel laughed to revive the spirits of the others, the feeling of annoyance was more loudly expressed than that of amusement. That solemn personage Dr. Lopez Sedeño was so unlucky as to plunge his foot into a puddle above his ankle, an accident over which he was unanimously condoled with. At last they reached the custom-house, and felt like voyagers safely landed after a dangerous passage between reefs and storms.

"It is an occasion for singing a *Te-Deum*," exclaimed Romero shaking his dripping skirts; but Don Angel, taking his seat on a barrel which was rolled out for the purpose, only repeated: "Poor sailors!"

At the very instant they heard the boom of a

gun. It was a vessel signalling for help. They all gazed out to sea through the driving scud, and there could discern a pale ghostly form, tossing its wild arms as it seemed in the air, and vomiting smoke.

"A steamer, a steamer!" they all exclaimed at once; and in a moment a crowd of sailors and fishermen had collected on the narrow strip of seawall.

"It is running on to The Camels!"

To the left of the estuary lay a shoal of rocks which at low-tide were completely uncovered, and at high-tide could be traced by a line of breakers. One of the more prominent of these rocks was "backed like a camel;" hence the name of "The Camels" as applied to the whole reef.

"Christ have mercy upon them! Poor souls!" exclaimed the Bishop, standing at the door of the shed.

"Does any one know the vessel?"

"It is English," said a sailor.

"Yes, it is the Plantagenet," said a stranger who happened to be looking on. "I saw her last week moored by the quay at Macozanedo, landing an English cargo."

"And will she be lost?" asked the gentlemen anxiously.

“She must have lost her rudder; they do not seem to be able to steer her,” said a tall and handsome sailor, dressed in a coarse woollen shirt and trousers turned up so as to show the whole of his legs to the knee, while his manly young head was covered by a sou’wester off which the water ran in riyulets.

“But all those poor souls will be drowned!” cried Don Juan in a tone of horror. “German we ought to make an effort to help them.”

“It would be rushing to meet death, señor,” said German lifting his hand to the brim of his sou’wester.

The Plantagenet during this discussion as to her fate was nearing The Camels. The steam rushed from her funnel with wild shrieks of rage, as an animal howls when it is wounded to death. It was a heavily-built barque with no elegance of form; it was a merchant-vessel and the hull was a mere storehouse, while the rigging was adapted to use rather than ornament—three masts with the necessary sheets and spars. The foremast had two yards and, from the mizzen which was a very small one, floated a red flag, blackened by smoke and wet, but still recognizable as the English Jack. The forepart of the ship rode much too high, displaying the lowest figures of her water-mark and the

badly-painted, rust-stained lower planks. She rolled fearfully, displaying now her straining side and then again her decks in the wildest confusion, all black, and washed by the seas she shipped, the hatchways, the cabin roof over the machinery, the bridge and the black funnel marked with a T, the initial of Taylor & Co., of Swansea, owners of thirty-two ships for freight and passengers.

The hapless vessel filled the spectators with that mixed emotion of pity and terror which is inseparable from the sight of imminent danger when we can render no assistance. They saw her fighting her way through the waves, vainly hoping to clear the rocks, and her very aspect seemed to acquire a character of its own, the personal element which an interesting object of study assumes in the eyes of those who watch it. To those who stood on land it was no longer a vessel, but a living thing, a shipwrecked wretch, that was struggling with the surges; they saw her break the waves with her stubborn front and shake them off as if to gain breath through the openings for the anchor-chains, which looked like gaping nostrils. The screw churned the waters, cutting a deeper trough in the waves and throwing up long wreaths of foam. The hull seemed to swallow great gulps of water and then, as she rolled, to vomit them in

cataracts at the port-holes, while the chimney never ceased its deep imprecation in the form of dense white steam that rushed out with a hideous roar like the shouting of a wounded whale.

“Serve the d——d English right!” said German. “They are a set of drunkards.”

“God knows how many pints of brandy are being drunk at this moment in the captain’s cabin!” added another man.

“Do not talk scandal now my children,” said the Bishop in a tone of horror. “Let us rather see if nothing can be done to save these wretched men.”

German replied with an ominous face and gesture.

“This vessel was coming to our port,” continued the prelate, anxious to try every means of exciting the interest of the rough mariners of Ficóbriga, “with the purpose of bringing us necessaries, merchandise, work and pay.”

“Begging your Reverence’s pardon—” growled a by-stander, “the Plantagenet cannot get over our bar. It can only be that on her way home to England she found she was in some way damaged and wanted to take shelter in the bay while she repaired her machinery. However, now she has lost her rudder and, as your Reverence may see,

in a couple of hours she will want nothing more in this world."

"Yes, I see that nothing can save the ship—but the crew, the living souls—"

At this juncture the miserable steamer's head went round to the northeast and her hind part sank deeper into the sea; she was caught in the trap. The sharp jaws of the rocks nipped the keel and the screw like an iron vice, there was no escaping their clutch. The perishing ship lifted her bows, showing all the forepart of her hull and part of her keel. She moved no more but with a convulsive shiver; the ruined tackle shook with a last agony, then the foremast with its double cross of spars gave way and fell like a broken stick. The waves still rose; marching victoriously over the dead body of the now immovable vessel, and taking possession with a ferocious and greedy triumph. One tumbled wildly in and rushed down to the hold, another flung itself over the deck, making a clean sweep of everything in its way; one danced insultingly up the shrouds and through the rigging, another dashed itself against the black bellying hull, while yet another, the most audacious of all, leaped over the funnel and poured down it to drown the engines.

"My sons, my children!" exclaimed the Bishop

in a voice of inspired dignity. "We are not Christians—we are unworthy to be Spaniards, if we leave those poor creatures to perish."

The sailors muttered and growled and looked from one to another as if to see which was the bravest. But the bravest did not seem to be forthcoming.

"It is impossible your Reverence," said German at last, "quite impossible," and he shrunk back among the others.

"It seems to me that the sea is subsiding," said Don Juan hoping to persuade two sailors who were his particular friends: "Courage, Boys!"

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!" said the good Bishop with fervent exaltation, "I implore you to rescue these hapless shipwrecked men. In the name of our Saviour Christ—"

There was utter silence—each man scratched his head and paused. Then one and another slipped away and up the hill towards home.

"Señor we shall be drowned too," exclaimed German. "Do not you see the waves are running mountains high?"

"Away with you, cowards!" said a vigorous, deep voice; a terrible voice worthy to be heard above the awful music of the waters. It was that of the curé.

“What—you? you will venture, señor curé?”

“And why should I not venture?” shouted Don Silvestre throwing off his cloak, his priest’s hat, his umbrella—all his cumbersome paraphernalia. His natural impetuosity and indomitable courage, not unused to face the forces of Nature, came out at the right moment in a really sublime manner.

“Right, right, soldier of Christ! Well done worthy priest!—Learn from him, O, ye of little faith!” exclaimed the Bishop, shedding tears of pious enthusiasm.

Don Silvestre bared his arms, showing his muscular wrists and hands as hairy as a bear’s paws—hands which could hold an oar as well as carry the sacred wafer. Then throwing off his cassock he pulled on a worsted jersey.

“Haul down the boat and a rope, two or three!—and let us see who is brave enough to come with me.”

“I—I—I”—All were ready to go.

“You,” said the curé, “and you and you,” and he hastily selected his crew.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CURÉ OF FICÓBRIGA.

THE moment had arrived—but before writing of the deed we must describe the hero.

Don Silvestre was young, fresh colored, strong and tall, bold even to rashness, ambitious of applause and fond of always finding himself in the foremost ranks; he was a warm friend to his friends and at the same time very eager, very hearty, quick-tempered but generous, frank and genial in his manner to high and low. In his church he was much run after by the gentler sex because he preached with a certain exaltation and in a picturesque and dramatic style; but the ungentle sex approved of him also, because he got through the mass with great expedition; so that when Padre Poquito celebrated mass—a slow and heavy man—all these faithful souls were overwhelmed with business and obliged to stand talking in the plaza.

“There is no one like Don Silvestre for a short mass,” they would say. “We are not idle folks who can afford to waste time or take a nap in

church. He goes through all the ceremonies and says all the Latin at a pace that is quite delightful."

Don Silvestre was a rich man. Besides possessing a fortune by inheritance, he had managed to acquire some arable and pasture land and had invested a round sum in the funds. He lived in much comfort himself, and though he did not torment or threaten his poor tenants for rent, he did not neglect the management of his property. He succored the needy, somewhat priding himself on his liberal almsgiving, by which and by his frank and happy nature, he lived greatly in charity and favor with his neighbors.

"Don Silvestre is no saint," they said. "But he is a gentleman."

Don Silvestre had moreover an iron constitution fortified by frequent exercise both in hunting and fishing, in which diversions he passed the major part of his existence. His house was a perfect arsenal of weapons for sport of both kinds, the like of which was not to be seen in all the country round. One room was wholly devoted to rifles, carbines, knives and traps and a hundred ingenious and complicated devices, some acquired, others the invention of his own genius, and all intended to scatter destruction among the feathered

tribes; while in another every contrivance was to be seen which could snatch from the deep each creature that swims. Rods, lines, tackle and various kinds of floats, baits, hooks, harpoons and spears—some for cod-fishing others for smaller fish; artificial flies to betray the innocent trout in the brook, gaffs for the salmon in the rivers, seines, and other kinds of nets, for trawling, dredging and hauling—this Nimrod of the land and water had them all. Romero had been born in that delightful region known as Europe, where it nevertheless would seem that man easily slips back to that primitive hunting stage of civilization—or barbarism—when he had to dispute the soil with the wild beasts, and it was hard to tell whether it would remain in possession of the stronger or of the more wily. Active, keen, enterprising and bold he, with other young men of the neighborhood, had even defied the dreadful bear. He had made himself familiar with the broken and rugged ground, the precipices and torrents, and all the dangers of a locality which, since the last cataclysm that had wrecked it, seemed never to have assumed any definite form, but had remained content in its savage wildness and freedom.

But the paternal voice had one day sounded in his ears warning him to consider the advisa-

bility of not letting slip certain ecclesiastical benefices, and Silvestre had crammed himself with a due quantum of Latin and been ordained. And he was not a bad curé; he forgot or shed many things—but never his inborn love of the chase.

“It is a vice”—people would say, “but a royal one.”

Don Silvestre was an impetuous and a somewhat wrong-headed mortal. In the discharge of anything he imagined to be his duty he always displayed considerable zeal; at one time he had set his mind on restoring and repairing the church and he himself was painter, mason and architect. When appeals were made to him to aid in the elections, he did wonders; his good fortune, the prestige he enjoyed among the lower orders, his jolly and gentlemanly nature all combined to command an army of electors and to have the happiest effect in the neighborhood. He placed his good-will and his influence at the service of the cause with so much eagerness, that during the perilous period when the natives of Ficóbriga were exercising this, the most important of their rights as citizens, the worthy Don Silvestre never was still in his garden, or by the sea-shore, nor even in the sacristry or his own house, but was rushing about from one place to another like a man possessed by the devil, or a dis-

tracted lover. He was to be seen skilfully availing himself, now of his astuteness, now of blandishments, using stern coercion to one, and to another insinuating cunning; and in this way he reduced every one to terms.

By all this experience Romero had succeeded in acquiring a perfect mastery of the arts and mysteries of electioneering, which never are really easy to learn; and while many a man lost his position and prestige by them, the curé of Ficóbriga by his acuteness and cleverness was lauded to the skies. To ride on horseback, to go through frost and snow for six leagues to defy the foe; to steal a march on the opposition and recruit his own forces, and still without any excessive or scandalous increase in the electioneering expenses, to realize the miracle of the loaves and fishes as applied to the schedule of electors—were so many exploits which only added to Don Silvestre's credit. In evidence of his energetic and all-conquering will a story shall here be told which was current in Ficóbriga at the time of my narration.

The election was eagerly contested and on the point of being lost. Among the voters who had come to vote at the last moment was a shepherd of some remote outlying part, a dull lout who could hardly speak his mother-tongue. Tired of

keeping the line in front of the door of the building where the registrars were taking the votes, and cursing the political privilege which he had come so far out of his customary rustic groove to exercise, he had turned upon his heel and was walking away. Not far from the place of voting was a stream, fordable higher up, but just here very deep, and our friend, in order to cross it, turned towards Villadiego. This lost vote might seriously affect the issue of the election. Don Silvestre marked the event, and with shouts of rage called to the countryman who was already safe on the other bank and who, finding himself at a judicious distance with the river between him and the foe, flourished his fists with gestures of mockery and defiance. Don Silvestre, exasperated at this savage clown, who not only made off at the critical moment of voting but, by his grotesque gesticulations insulted him—Don Silvestre—in the moment of his supremacy, did not hesitate a moment but with prompt decision threw himself into the water. Being a good swimmer and having flung off his cassock, in a few seconds he was standing on the opposite shore of the little river. He rushed after the fugitive, seized him by the collar, and dragging him back with irresistible vigor and rapidity he shoved him into the water; then, holding on by

his hair, he triumphantly towed him across and led him—both streaming with water—into the voting booth where he placed him in front of the urn.

This vigorous proceeding struck terror into the hearts of the doubtful and recalcitrant, and secured the election to Don Silvestre's party.

Many more such anecdotes might be related in farther evidence of the indomitable spirit of this worthy, but there is no need to add to the details of this portrait. To complete a sketch which though brief, is accurate, I may say that Don Silvestre was equally skilled in playing draughts and chess. He and Don Juan de Lantigua fought peaceably over the board almost every evening.

He had two or three fishing-boats of his own and often went out to sea, so that he was as familiar with the terrible element, and as learned in its changeful moods as any professional expert. He could swim like a fish, and was the astonishment of all his neighbors in doing battle with the waves; and in holding the tiller, or taking an oar, or managing the stern sheet while the boat was riding in over the bar, the most experienced fishermen were hardly his match. The people would say that the sea was afraid of him, and that he could say of it that he mocked at that Dragon.

When we first become acquainted with him, Don Silvestre's favorite occupation and golden dream was the cultivation of a beautiful garden and orchard that he had made in a spot known as the Copse of Brijan, facing Ficóbriga, and on the opposite side of the river, beyond the bridge of Judas. There he would spend the chief part of the day, without however—to his honor be it said—neglecting his duties in the parish. Although he usually lived in Ficóbriga, he had a pretty house at the Copse, with the finest garden produce in all the country round and a large paddock and stables full of creatures '*pusilla cum magnis*,' of every sort and kind. Peacocks, geese and fowls of all kinds, milch cows, rabbits, corpulent swine, whose backs he would complacently rake with the end of his stick, exotic birds and goats—in short everything that could take or give pleasure in a country life.

But in these latter days of our narrative, Don Silvestre had not been attending much to his model farm at the Copse, being much absorbed in the election matters of his friend Don Rafael del Horro. This friendship had been cemented by their connection in certain newspapers, and by the merits of certain letters written, as has been said, by Don Silvestre to a Madrid journal and signed

with the *nom de plume* of 'the mountain shepherd.' Rafael del Horro was now living in the curé's house, and most of their hours were spent in gratifying discussions as to the resources at their disposal and the chances of a triumphant issue. They had agreed to take their stand, side by side, on the field of battle and never to retreat till they had achieved a complete victory over the "unrighteous and infidels."

This was the singular and daring man who had declared: "I will save these shipwrecked wretches."

A minute later and he had sprung into the boat which boldly rushed out on the waves. Don Silvestre had perfect faith in his own strong arm, and his skill and experience as a boatman.

The little barque bravely faced the breakers, it rose on their threatening crests and disappeared in the trough behind, hidden too by the whirling clouds of spray. Now it seemed as though the waters had swallowed it at a gulp, again, as if the gulf had spewed it out from jaws foaming with rage. Still, it made way, feeble but brave—like faith amid the turbulent waters of a wicked world.

Don Angel had taken off his green sombrero, which was reduced to a sponge, and kneeling in the mire, prayed aloud; Don Juan, Rafael and

Sedeño were deeply touched by this manifestation of a pure and exalted christian spirit.

“They will get to them—they will reach them and save them,” said Don Angel, with the profound conviction of eager faith. “God will hear our prayers.”

The brave party had nearly reached the ship, they caught the stout rope that was flung to them, and in less than an hour the whole crew were on shore. As the boat turned to pull back to land, the storm began to lull and the waves subsided, as if Ocean itself, the implacable main, were moved to pity.

When the hapless crew, eight in all, set foot on shore, Don Angel embraced them all, mingling his tears with the salt-water with which they were drenched. The alcalde (magistrate) and his secretary, the constable and a crowd of others, including Don Juan Amarillo who filled the post of French consul, had collected on the beach. In an instant they had arranged to give the unfortunate shipwrecked men the assistance and shelter they needed, one and another taking refuge in the different houses that could accommodate them; and one, who had had a severe blow and had lost consciousness, was given into the care of Señor de Lantigua.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SHIPWRECKED HERO.

THEY lifted and carried him with the greatest care, they put him to bed, and Don Nicomedes came, the worthy doctor of Ficóbriga.

“Blows on the head which do not seem to be serious,”—he said, “and some choking with salt-water.”

He prescribed some simple domestic remedies and rest and quiet. Everything was done with equal promptness and zeal, and the injured man, after murmuring a few words in a low voice, seemed to be sleeping easily. They then left him alone for a few minutes and presently, when Don Juan returned, the gentleman—for he was beyond a doubt a gentleman—opened his eyes, looking around him with eager curiosity.

“Keep perfectly quiet I beg,” said Don Juan, “you are among friends, well taken care of, and shall want for nothing. The peril has been fearful but, thank God! you and your worthy comrades are all in safety.” The patient spoke a few words in English, and looking from one to the other he

fixed a pair of large blue eyes on the faces of Gloria, Don Juan and Don Angel, as if mere sight were a recovered joy. Just so might a man look who had risen from the grave.

“Where am I?” he asked in Spanish.

“In Spain, in Ficóbriga, an insignificant seaport town which has been so unfortunate as to witness the loss of the Plantagenet, but at the same time so happy as to snatch eight men from the sea.” In a tone of deep and pathetic feeling the young man said :

“O Lord our God how marvellous is thy name in all the world!” and the Bishop echoed his words, quoting the Psalm in Latin. Then there was a pause of solemn silence, during which each one present could almost hear the agitated beating of his own heart.

“And now, how do you find yourself?”

“Well, well,” said the patient in a confident tone and laying his hand upon his heart he added: “Many thanks.”

“Though you speak Spanish it seems to me that you must be a foreigner.”

“Yes, Señor—I am a foreigner.”

“English?” “No, Señor, I come from Altona.”

“Altona!” said his Reverence, who was not

strong in modern geography. "And where is that?" And he went to look at an old map hanging on the wall.

"It is on the Elbe not far from Hamburg," said Don Juan.

"I am a native of Hamburg," said the patient in a firm voice. "But my family is English. I lived for six months in Seville and Córdoba three years since, and now—"

"You were going to England?"

"He ought not to talk much yet," said his Reverence anxiously. "We will leave him to repose."

"Thank you, Señor, but I can talk. Yes, I was going to England, but God would not permit—"

His face expressed the deepest trouble.

"Be quiet, my friend," said Don Juan. "You have nothing to be uneasy about. You will get home yet. Have you any family?"

"Parents, brothers—"

"Your only care now is to rest and get well; you will want for nothing in my house. My name is Juan de Lantigua; this is my brother Angel, Bishop of Tresestellas, and this young girl is my daughter Gloria. We will take the tenderest care of you; God has bidden us comfort the unhappy

and cherish the suffering. It is not every day that the opportunity offers for a work of mercy."

The stranger looked at Don Ángel and at Gloria as Don Juan introduced them and then, taking Don Juan's hand he pressed it to his breast.

"He that followeth after mercy findeth life, righteousness and honor," he said; and again the Bishop repeated the quotation in Latin from the twenty-first chapter of Proverbs.

"Now," said Señor de Lantigua, "rest my friend. Señor what is your name?"

"Daniel."

"And your surname?"

"Morton," and the stranger went on to add the warmest expressions of regard and gratitude. He seemed to devour the three with his eyes, as if they were a celestial apparition that had dawned suddenly on him in the midst of the horrors and darkness of death.

"What we have been able to do deserves neither praise nor such gratitude," said Don Juan. "It is the simplest and easiest of the commands of Christ.—But you must take some food. Gloria, have something tempting prepared for this gentleman. Of course he must not have any but light food at present."

CHAPTER XX.

HIS REVERENCE'S ADMIRABLE PROJECT.

SIX times had the sun risen over the bold summit of Monteluz, by the sea; six times had it set behind La Cotería de Fronilde, bathing the mountains in purple haze, and nothing that appears worthy of record had happened in the house of the Lantiguas. The leisure hours were wholly filled with singing fervent praises of Don Silvestre's heroic deed, and with comments now on the human, and now on the divine aspect of the rescue; but regarding each through a glorifying haze, as in truth was well deserved, while, according to Don Angel, the result was a miracle wrought by the sublime faith and herculean strength which the great Romero owed to the mercy of God.

The news soon spread throughout the province, which enjoyed the supreme honor of possessing on its happy soil the illustrious town of Ficóbriga; it even reached Madrid, *en route* for London, where in fact it ultimately became known.

Who so proud as Don Silvestre? During these

days he had worn a countenance as beaming as the noonday sun, while he was never tired of describing the sublime perils of the moment, and painting the fury of the storm-lashed sea in terms so vivid that his hearers seemed to see it all. Daniel Morton, more than any one, delighted in listening to Señor Romero's history of the shipwreck and miraculous rescue, and knew not how to express his gratitude, since the mere proffer of a deep and life-long friendship seemed wholly inadequate.

The stranger thus snatched from a watery grave was not yet able to leave the room which had been assigned to him, but he received frequent visits from all the household, who treated him with the utmost consideration and affection. He, for his part, well deserved all the attention he received, for he was a man of singularly gentlemanly and courteous demeanor. Don Juan was not slow in discovering that his involuntary guest was a man of good birth and distinguished breeding, of delightful manners, gracious in his gratitude to all; and he then found that his nature was honorable and his spirit lofty, his mind highly intelligent and of such wide culture, that all the members of Lantigua's family were fairly astounded at his knowledge.

“There is no doubt that he is a most accomplished gentleman,” said Don Juan to his brother, as they and Doctor Sedeño were sitting over their chocolate, on their return from the Abbey church, where the Bishop celebrated mass daily.

“None whatever. He pleases me extremely,” replied the Bishop. “What a pity that he should be a Protestant?”

“Is he?”

“He must be,” said Sedeño. “And whenever we touch upon religious subjects he tries to turn the conversation or to drop out of it.”

“But has he said anything derogatory to our holy Church?”

“Nothing, not a word. He is very deferential in all that concerns catholicism, and I have never heard him utter a word that could be taken as an offence, nor even by a suggestive silence.—”

“What an opportunity my dear brother,” interrupted Don Angel with devout eagerness, “for making a grand conquest, for leading a lost sheep into the true fold.”

Don Juan was doubtful.

“It would be a hard task,” he said. “That man has convictions.”

“But his convictions are dangerous. Listen to me—as I intend to try—”

“Take care; these heretics when you touch their heresy are like the porcupine—”

“Nothing can be lost by trying, man. He must remain in your house for some time yet, for it will not be right to let him go before he is perfectly convalescent.”

“Certainly not.”

“Well then, what can we lose in the matter? I will say something to him which must go to his soul. I will sow the seed, my son, and if it falls on stony ground it will not be my fault. I shall have done my duty.”

“It will fall in stony ground,” said Don Juan with the conviction of a man accustomed to contemplate a world in ruins, and wearied of scattering seed broadcast on a soil whence nothing ever could spring.

“But think, if God were to touch his heart—if a ray of divine light—I shall know no peace till I have made the attempt.”

“You will lose your time, my dear brother.”

“I think not. I can see that this man has no vulgar soul; on the contrary, he has a singularly enlightened mind.”

“That is certain, more’s the pity.”

“And a noble heart.”

“Equally true.”

“ Well, we have then the chief thing, a promising soil.”

“ And prejudices, habits, foregone conclusions, firmly grounded ideas—that is to say a growth of noxious weeds which has already struck root and taken possession?”

“ Weeds man! I laugh at the weeds. Our Saviour has taught us to pluck them out and cast them into the fire. I will not be discouraged till I have made the attempt. Will you allow me to press him to prolong his stay by a few days?”

“ Just as you wish. We shall see how he takes it. But do not let us end by losing his warm regard, and even perhaps the gratitude he feels—”

“ It is just that gratitude that I propose to work upon. That is the chink for the thin end of the wedge, the soft place in his heart; in there and we shall see!—”

Don Juan laughed and called his daughter. Gloria had breakfasted at an hour when the birds were still saluting the dawn; for she had much to do, had the *Señorita de Lantigua*, and it was necessary to begin the day early. As she came into the dining-room with the hasty step of a person who has a heap of business on her hands, her father said:

“Have you forgotten the coffee for our friend up-stairs?”

“No, papa, I have this moment taken it up.”

“What bad taste in this foreigner not to like chocolate!” exclaimed Don Angel finishing off what was left in the chocolate pot. “Gloria, my child, come with me and take a turn in the garden.”

Sedeño took up a paper he had received the previous evening, and fixed his gaze on it through his spectacles, assuming an air of great importance.

“You see what irreligion leads to, Señor Don Juan,” said he dashing his left hand emphatically on the printed sheet before him. “Only hear this case.” And he read it aloud.

Don Juan, pushing aside the chocolate tray bent his hand round behind his ear to serve as an ear-trumpet. He was slightly deaf, particularly with his right ear, and when there was any atmospheric disturbance. Don Angel meanwhile had gone out humming a tune and accompanied by his niece.

“Little one,” said he, “your father wishes to speak to you.”

Gloria felt a pang of alarm, for she remembered that the last time, a few days since, when her uncle had said the same words it had been on the vexatious subject of Don Rafael del Horro. As she

passed into the garden through the porch she pulled a spray of honeysuckle to suck the honey out of the ends of the flowers.

“Juan complains that you have given him no answer to a question he asked you.”

“I know, I know!”—said Gloria feeling that every word her uncle spoke struck like a thorn into her heart.

“However, I do not interfere in such matters,” added his Reverence. “You must come to an understanding with your father. It is not as if the young man were off and away to-day. But do me the favor not to walk so fast, for my legs, child, are none of the best. Since the day of the great storm—”

“When they saved Señor Morton—”

“Yes and I consider the ducking well recompensed. It was a great triumph. Tell me one thing about that gentleman—”

Gloria, nibbling the honeysuckle, listened with all her soul.

“Have you observed,” continued his Reverence pausing in his walk, “whether this gentleman—”

“Señor Morton?”

“Precisely; if Señor Morton has ever uttered a word on the subject of our sacred religion.”

“ I have heard him speak of God, of—wait a minute, I will think.”

“ That is not the point, silly child. They all speak of God ; how few know him ! Have you heard him say anything in any way depreciating our holy faith ?”

“ No uncle—”

“ Because, I will tell you, my brother and I, and Sedeño too, have come to the conclusion that this man is a Protestant.”

“ A Protestant !” Gloria stood still with horror. “ That means to say that he will be damned !—It is a pity that with such a good heart—”

“ Of course it is a pity—I will confess to you that I am truly grieved about it ; deeply and sincerely grieved.”

“ It makes one long to run to him at once and cry out: “ Señor for God’s sake save yourself, think where you are going—Come, come with us.”

“ Just so—as when we see a blind man rushing on to a precipice; you have rendered my feeling exactly. Since the day when this young man came into the house I have never been quite easy, and the day he leaves it I shall be miserable, that is to say, if he leaves it as he entered it—blind.”

“ Protestant.”

“Just so, and it seems to me that I am an unworthy apostle of Christ if I do not succeed—”

“In converting him?” asked Gloria incredulously.

“You think it will be difficult? But things more difficult than that have been done. It is impossible that God should have created so fair a specimen of humanity only to be lost eternally. Who knows whether in His infinite wisdom He may not have led this man to our shores, and through his shipwreck have opened to him the way of salvation.”

“Oh! who knows!” exclaimed Gloria, raising her eyes to heaven as though to enquire whether her uncle’s theory could be a true one: “God is admirable in his dispensations!”

“He is the Truth, the Life, and the Way. Well, I am determined to address myself to this young man; to speak to him boldly, face to face, as the minister of Christ that I am, and to say to him: ‘Morton, you ought to be a Catholic.’”

“Quite right uncle!” exclaimed Gloria, clasping her hands with enthusiasm while her eyes sparkled with moisture.

“I am quite determined,” continued his Reverence, feeling himself full of the apostolic aspiration which so greatly adorned him in the pulpit,

“to say to him, as Christ said to Lazarus: ‘Morton, arise! Morton, come forth! You were not born to dwell in that abyss of darkness. Cast off those sacrilegious grave clothes and gaze on the light I hold up before your eyes, this divine light which the Lord has vouchsafed to entrust to me that it may guide you and illuminate your path. Come, rest on my heart, my son, come and add to the glory of Christ’s kingdom by your splendid intelligence, your finely-strung nature, your noble but erring soul.’ And if he obeys my bidding, that day will be the most glorious of my life; I shall have snatched a victim from Satan’s clutches, and have rescued one miserable wretch from eternal fires; have gained one sheep for Christ’s fold, and extended the sacred dominion of the Church, and when God calls me to himself I may say: ‘Lord I have won one battle against the Foe.’”

“Oh, uncle, dear, good uncle!” exclaimed Gloria, frantically kissing the prelate’s hands which were trembling with emotion and excitement: “You are a saint.”

“A saint! no, but, as I consider this case, I cannot forget that of the young man called Saul, who was afterwards so glorious an apostle. I shall be content to fill the part of Ananias, who by God’s command went in search of the persecutor

of the Church and said to him: 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus that appeared to thee in the way as thou camest hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith and arose and was baptized.'"

"Saint Paul!" murmured Gloria.

"Yes, and one of the most glorious converts to the Christian faith. This man was so sagacious that our Lord desired to bring him into His fold, and He brought him. In the last two or three days I have thought of nothing else; and as I talk more with this young man and hear his words and measure the height of his discernment and intelligence, my desire grows to say to him: 'Brother Saul, Jesus Christ has sent me to restore you to sight.' In all heroic deeds the more valuable is the conquest to be made the more we rise to the occasion; the soul displays more energy and valor in proportion to the importance of the stronghold to be conquered and to the fame and skill of the enemy."

"And as Daniel seems—"

"Nay, does not seem—is—is one of the most perfect of God's creatures. When I watch the strong and lofty flights of his spirit, I say again

and again: 'What a pity! O Lord, what a pity!' Do you remember his beautiful explanation of the relations of the forces of Nature to the mystery of Divine foreknowledge?"

"Oh yes! I remember."

"And his reflections on the death of his two young sisters who caught a fever while nursing the sick?"

"Yes, uncle, yes—I remember very well."

"And how all he said showed the simplicity of his sentiments, a patriarchal innocence free from all guile, and his admiration for all the works of God?"

"Yes indeed—I recollect it all."

"And then his kindly feeling for our poor and unhappy country?"

"Yes uncle—everything."

"And as I see him and hear him, how can I help saying: 'What a pity—what a pity!'"

"What a pity!" echoed Gloria, clasping her hands and raising them to the level of her chin.

"To-day—this very day, I propose beginning my great undertaking," said the Bishop with lofty decision. "At last we may do something grand in our petty lives."

"This very day?—but, to be sure, he will be going soon!" said Gloria with feigned simplicity.

“No, for your father and I have agreed to tell him that he must remain in Ficóbriga and indeed in our house for another fortnight—perhaps a month.”

“Then, uncle—then,” exclaimed the girl, hardly able to conceal her joy, “you will triumph, the Church of Christ must triumph! Oh! what a good idea you and papa have had!”

“I think I shall go and tell him at once. He will no doubt accept, for he is not very strong, and the quiet of this place must be good for him. To-day I will speak to him of religion, and I cannot lack for arguments. With a good heart and a sound nature half the work is done.—Do you know if he is up yet?”

“Roque can tell us.” The man-servant was crossing the garden.

“Is Señor Morton up yet?”

“Yes, Señor; I am going on an errand for him,” and he showed them a large bundle.

“What is that?”

“All the clothes that Señor Daniel had in the trunks that got wet. He is sending them to the Señor Don Silvestre to give to the poor.”

“I will wager,” said Gloria angrily, “that he will not give a rag of them to Caifás.”

“ I will go up to him at once,” said the Bishop resolutely.

Gloria accompanied him to the foot of the stairs, then she ran off to the kitchen. Her whole soul was soaring in some supernal region of purest ether and full celestial light—like the angels who wave their pinions round the throne of the great Lord of all creation.

CHAPTER XXI.

A WHITED SEPULCHRE.

THE contrast was a strange one indeed which, while her soul had fled like a bird to the hills—as the Psalmist hath it—held her body in so humble a spot as a kitchen ; where, after turning up her sleeves from her white arms and tying on a large white apron, she proceeded to beat with a light hand a mass of eggs—yolks and whites—which soon rose in the deep pan to a frothy mountain of fragile foam. The fork, which she whisked so fast that it was almost invisible, tossed up a pale gold cloud, and the transparent albumen

boiled up in tempting amber balls or a shower of pale, transparent topaz. Then she lifted the mixture from one pan to another, peeled a lemon, minced it finely, stirred some flour into the eggs, took out of a box certain dried specimens, wrinkled but sweetened by age, and which in their youth had been grapes, fetched some cakes, and finally arranged the whole concoction in a tin mould with the utmost rapidity and neatness, till Francisca, who could not endure such an invasion of her territory, broke out indignantly with :

“What are you doing there, silly girl? What sort of a mess is that?”

“You are the silly girl”—answered Gloria laughing. “What do you know of delicate cooking or of puddings?”

“And who is that for, if you please?” the maid went on in a tone of irony. “For the dog when it is done? For God’s sake, child, what need have you to come here, spoiling your hands. Go up stairs, we want no messing here.”

The old cook treated Gloria with the familiarity of servants who have seen the birth of all the children of the household. Gloria, after bustling about a good deal, announced that she had done her task and left the kitchen, going up to her own room, where she made herself neat and put on

some little finery, as it was now nearly breakfast time.*

In anticipation of that event, Don Rafael del Horro now arrived and with him the curé, both very full of the journey they were to make that day on the business of the election; they went up stairs to pay their respects to Don Juan in his study; but as they found him very busy with a heap of letters he was writing to various influential personages in the province, and which our two friends were to deliver, and Sedeño wholly absorbed in his study of newspaper-politics, they went down into the garden.

Gloria, after having glanced at the dining-room and seeing that Robustiana was laying the table, also went out into the garden. Here, in a spot quite near to the public road was a little grove of tall magnolias, a few firs of different kinds and two or three planes, which towered above all the rest of the vegetable tribe in the garden and, spreading their broad arms in space so far as to pass over from the enclosure on one side to fraternize with the elms on the high road, while on the other, they

* In Spain meals are eaten on the plan very usual throughout the continent of Europe. That which answers to our breakfast consists merely of a cup of coffee or chocolate with a roll or biscuit, and what is called breakfast—or *déjeuner*—is a much heavier meal at any hour from ten to one, more like what we call luncheon. There is but one other meal, which may be called dinner or supper, and is served at any hour from six to eight or nine.—*Translator.*

waved against the windows of the house. In the middle of this shady retreat stood a summer-house, round which grew a sort of thicket of spindle-trees, fragrant broom, tamarinds, veronicas, oleanders and other shrubs, in artful mixture and confusion. Through this, in a semicircular course, led a dark and damp path where the spiders had spread their webs undisturbed, and had hung fine clammy threads from branch to branch and from tree to tree. Gloria took this path, but presently, hearing voices, stopped short. Her first idea was to pay no heed but to walk on, but she heard her own name and recognized the voice as Don Rafael's. He and the curé were talking together in the summer-house. Curiosity was too much for her and she listened.

“Gloria is perfection as you say”—remarked Don Silvestre—“and besides and above this she is the only daughter of a rich man. My opinion friend Rafael is that everything should not be sacrificed to sentiment and to ‘I love you,’ ‘I adore you,’ but that some regard should be had for the fortune and position of the happy couple. The description you have given me of the burthen that life has become in that diabolical law court perfectly horrifies me. Tell me how is law business going on.”

“Badly,” answered the young man in a tone of disgust. “Since Lantigua let every comer have a turn at his desk all the ecclesiastical business has been dispersed. Come what may something must be done.”

“And the newspaper?”

“That can hardly be accounted a lucrative profession. It is a capital means of making way in political life, and that is the only career in which a young man can get on.”

“And you have done well in it,” said the curé somewhat hyperbolically.—“At four and thirty.—This infant will make its way in the world.”

“But you do not know my friend what compromises and what frightful expenses burthened this wretched paper in its early days. The position we aimed at could only be reached—”

“Ah, ya, ya! I know all about it. A frightful outlay, and all the rest of it. But what then? Do you expect to catch fish without wetting your trousers?”

“No, no—I know what fishing means—”

“They say that in England none but rich men go into politics,” said the curé. “Now that seems to me an admirable system.”

“In Spain, on the contrary it is the opening

for poor ones. It is an evil I know; but what is to be done! Law is no good, my friend, excepting for those who stick to their office with such zeal as may earn them a seat in the ministry. Trade on a large scale requires capital, and on a small scale it is unworthy of a man who has worked for a professional career; there is nothing left but that of arms, or politics—and I have no taste for arms.”

“The arms of the tongue and pen my friend,” said the curé with enthusiasm. “Do you know, if there is a thing in this world that I covet it is glory such as yours.”

“There is little in it to covet,” replied Rafael in a certain tone of dejection, which contrasted strongly with his usual boastful swagger. “I sometimes laugh at myself, and when I am alone in my office I say to myself: ‘Can it be true that you are the very man who, on occasion, can deliver such terrific diatribes, and write such furious articles to rouse the enthusiasm of your party! I—I who am incapable of killing a flea and do not wish to hurt a living creature—I preach destruction to all existing society; I, who like every youngster in the world have my doubts about many things that we are taught in the catechism—though not about general principles—I storm and rage as

though I wished to engulf all who are not ardent believers.' ”

“ Ah, ha !” cried the curé laughing. “ That is a common evil nowadays.—Black men and white men alike, no one has any faith. A short time since I was talking to a man who passes all his life in writing against the disbelievers and leading and dragging in converts to the Church ; well, he said to me in confidence : ‘ Don Silvestre nothing in the world will make me believe in hell.’ I laughed heartily at his odd confession, and we never fought it out, for I hate a discussion. We use to go out shooting together. I showed him the rough notes of my sermons that he might cast an eye over them.—Why not ? He is a man of excellent style and taste—a sort of Fray Luis de Granada without frock or the faith, the best of fellows, and an excellent man. You, too, are one of those who talk much and believe little.”

“ Nay—let us understand each other, my good friend. I believe this, that no society is possible without religion. What would not the unfettered license of the blind and ignorant masses bring us to, if religion did not bridle their evil passions ?”

The curé laughed.

“ But faith,” he replied, “ includes something beyond a mere bridle to check and guide the ig-

norant. The cultured and learned ought to refine and purify their faith by study."

"So it ought to be no doubt," said Rafael. "Each and all ought to contribute as far as possible to uphold and strengthen that foundation of the social edifice. If religion were to fail and disappear, the demagogues and *pétroleuses* would declare war to the knife. It is fearful to think of!"

"Frightful, frightful."

"For this reason I am of opinion that masses, sermons, fasts, processions, meetings and all the rites and customs which have been devised to aid in the great work of the State, should be continued; they serve, too, as a bulwark and security to protect the upper and more influential classes."

"Then from your point of view," said the curé, laughing heartily with frank amusement, "all religious practices amount to nothing more than a kind of correctional apparatus against aggressors. But my dear Don Rafael, to carry out your system fairly we ought to say: 'Suppress religion and increase the police.'"

"Nay, nay, do not jest; and above all remember that I am talking to you in strict confidence—it must go no farther. The world would get on badly indeed without religion. Blessed, a thous-

and times blessed, are the beliefs we have inherited from our fathers and the faith in which we were cradled! How precious! how consoling is religion! women find it so full of comfort!—If a member of a family dies, a mother, a brother, a child, they believe that they shall meet again, that the lost one is in Heaven above the clouds—if a child, that it is wandering happily from star to star. Religion ought to survive as long as the world lasts, and it will survive. Besides containing many consoling elements it includes some that are irrefragable truths.”

“All its dogmas are truths, and not some, as you say,” answered the curé assuming a grave air. “If I had my books at hand, or could readily remember all the good things I have read in them, I could prove to you that everything, yes everything that the Church asserts, is truth and serves as an immense consolation to the ignorant and the learned alike, to the poor and to the rich. But I have a most provoking memory, and with all my daily occupations and business I forget everything.”

“Oh, I have read plenty too, and for my part I cannot accuse myself of ever having done any harm either to the Church or to individual ecclesiastics. On the contrary, in my speeches or in

private conversation with my political friends, I have always said: 'Gentlemen religion before anything. We must not release the people from its moral yoke.—Besides, we must keep the Church on our side; it is a great ally of the State and we must keep it in a good humor. If it asks for our cloak we must give it our coat also.' Bah! I hate these men who call themselves philosophers and free-thinkers and who set themselves up to proclaim in assemblies and in clubs, that the Church is this or that or the other. To them I say: 'Gentleman our differences are very small at bottom; how can it be denied that many of the things that the Church asks us to believe can never be made to agree with our common sense? But still, what need can there be to mount a pulpit and tell the whole world so? The ignorant mob cannot understand you, and all they will gather from your teaching is that they will plunder and murder as they please. You must look round you and think twice before you air certain doctrines.—And for this reason I am the sworn foe of those charlatans, and in my own humble sphere I defend religious belief with speech and pen; the whole dogma of the Catholic Church, its ceremonies and its priesthood—all venerable institutions on which the social order rests; I stand up for the faith of our fathers,

their simple practices, the prayers our mothers taught us in the cradle—all in fact which it is so easy to inculcate, and which is so humanizing, so sweet and beautiful—for religion is sweet and beautiful. I have been to Rome and seen many ceremonies in St. Peter's. Ah! Don Silvestre, there is something to rouse enthusiasm! and then the processions at Seville! All such things must be cherished and preserved."

"All should be preserved; still, the really important element is faith, and if that is not cherished and preserved—"

"Of course—faith as well. We must all do our best to make others believe, to diffuse the gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that the creed of our fathers may continue to flourish—the creed and faith of our venerated fathers!"

"You, Rafael," said the curé, "are one of a school which defends religion out of pure selfishness; that is to say because you need it as an ally; you regard it as a body-guard, or rather a patrolling constabulary. 'Religion is a good thing,' you say, 'and ought to be accredited. I, to be sure, do not believe; but other folks ought, because then they will fear God and will do me no harm.' But in all this there is no thought of the loftier aims of religion nor of eternal life."

“Eternal life!” exclaimed Don Rafael. “Aye, that is the great question. An admirable scheme for preventing the disruption of society.”

“You do not believe in it?”

“Yes, I do. There must necessarily be something after and beyond death—for we can hardly be snuffed out and there an end. Still, I cannot help saying: If after we are dead there is nothing of all we are told, if we simply sink into a deep, oblivious sleep, what then, friend Romero? And to tell you the truth, think of it as I will, I cannot altogether rid myself of doubts. Frankly, something which is not a shade, not a breath, not a ray of light even, something which is mere nothingness is to survive beyond the grave and we are to go to Heaven or to hell?—Ah! there I stick—nothing will make me believe in hell. Is it possible that you can maintain that there actually is a pit full of fire into which those who have committed little sins are to be thrown? Come, come, I think the Church itself will have to come to a compromise as to this matter of hell-fire, and admit that it is—between ourselves—anything you please. Then, eternal life, Paradise?—In short, the more we think of these things the more we are puzzled, and it is far better to set them aside.”

“Would to God!” exclaimed Don Silvestre

slapping his hard bony hand violently on to his knee. "Would to God I could only remember all I have read in my books; I would answer you point by point on all these questions, and leave you as convinced of the existence of the soul, of hell and of heaven, as of the day-light around us—but I have a wickedly bad memory; I read a thing in the morning and have forgotten it in the afternoon. And then I am so busy; you may suppose that with coming and going to my farm and to the shore I have no time even to open a book. But, Don Rafael, bless me! what opinions you hold! Good heavens! I have only to tell this to the electors and then.—But, on the contrary, everything must be for religion and again for religion. I have played them into that tune, and to that tune they have danced, to a miracle."

"And they shall dance to it again," said Del Horro smiling. "But indeed, Don Silvestre, it seems to me that if we do not soon start to-day we shall come in somewhat late."

"We have time and to spare. To-night we get as far as Villamojada and see our friends there; to-morrow we can go on to Medio-Valle and see our friends there.—It all amounts to that, going from village to village and seeing our friends. Trust me, my friend. In all that concerns Madrid

and heavy politics you may preach and shake your head; but in this part of the world, and in the matter of elections leave it to me, and hold your tongue and be easy. Every animal to his own element."

"I have full confidence in your merit, worthy curé," said Rafael with a mighty slap on the gigantic priest's shoulder.—"Ah! if all my business in this infernal town was half as prosperous and as certain as my election—"

"Ah—you mean with regard to Señorita de Lantigua? What a heavenly morsel!—Well it is your own fault if that fish will not bite—"

"But if Gloria does not like me and seems determined that she never will!"

"Bah! after you are married that will be all right," said the curé. "The mischief lies in your having put the matter in Don Juan's hands, and he with his finessing and rigmarole has risked losing the game. If I were Don Juan I should soon settle the question by saying: 'Now, child, here is a chance to get married and have done with it.'"

"I cannot get it out of my head that Gloria has got some lover already in Ficóbriga," said Rafael hesitatingly.

"The fact is that this girl, in spite of her quick

manner and her eyes that flash fire, is a perfect icicle."

"I do not know—how should I know?" said the young Christian champion, gazing at the ground and letting each word drop slowly. "All I can tell you is that I am in love with her—over head and ears."

Gloria felt that she would rather hear no more and she stole away.

CHAPTER XXII.

GLORIA'S ANSWER.

SHE went into her father's study at the same moment as Don Angel, whose countenance was radiant with satisfaction and who was smoothing each hand alternately with the other, a very common sign of satisfaction in those who have just achieved a good action.

"My dear brother," began his Reverence, "it seems to me that I have not knocked at the door of an empty house—I met with a response."

"Really!" exclaimed Don Juan, putting his last letter into an envelope.

"He began by being much gratified by your

renewed kindness, and he accepts your offered hospitality for a fortnight or a month longer."

"And did you speak to him of religion?" asked Lantigua, passing his tongue over the gummed flap of the envelope.

"Yes, but he avoided the subject with the greatest dexterity; he would not enter on any deep questions of doctrine, and would only speak of generalities—the creation, the goodness of God, forgiveness of injuries—nothing dogmatic."

"He was afraid of betraying himself. This reserve pleases me much, for I cannot bear to hear a heretic flaunt his heresy and put forward commonplace arguments like those in the newspapers."

"I have never heard him utter a vulgar sentiment. But I could draw nothing out of him with regard to the articles of his belief," said the Bishop with some annoyance. "However, one thing I can assure you with perfect certainty and that is—"

"Well, what?" Don Angel brought his chair rather nearer to his brother's.

"That he has a deeply religious mind, a soul full of faith—"

"But what form of faith, that is the question."

"True," said the Bishop hastily correcting himself. "You are right. I will call it a predisposition towards faith, the immediate precursor of the

true faith to which he must come. I might compare the state of that noble soul to a lamp perfectly trimmed, and filled with oil to the top of the wick—nothing wanting but to apply the light.”

“And is that nothing?”

“Nothing but a match; a breath, a gust, and it will flash into flame. But that which all the efforts of a lifetime can never succeed in is to light an untrimmed lamp.”

“Certainly not.”

“Now Señor Morton,” Don Angel went on, “may be in darkness as regards the true light, but it certainly is not for want of eyes to see. How different he is from so many of the young men of these parts, who call themselves Christians and Catholics and have indeed learnt the true doctrine, but who, by their frivolity and moral corruption, show the vacancy of their minds, darkened souls without faith; the whited sepulchres of which our Lord speaks.”

Gloria went up to her father.

“A pretty state of things in the French Assembly!” Doctor Sedeño suddenly exclaimed from behind his newspaper. “This is the dispersion of the tribes! Oh, France, France! what chastisement is in store for you! Listen your Reverence and you will form some idea of how a

nation sets to work to quit the paths of the true faith."

Don Angel looked at his secretary and at the paper he was reading. Gloria meanwhile laid her hand on her father's shoulder.

"What do you want my child?" said he, affectionately taking her hand. "Ah, you little monkey, now I have got you I shall not let you go without giving you a lecture."

"And what for?"

"Because you have not kept to your bargain. A few days since I spoke to you about a serious matter; you promised to answer me soon and now is the time—"

"Yes papa," said Gloria, "now is the time. I have come to answer you."

Don Juan laid down his pen.

"I answer no," said the girl, smiling, but emphasizing her reply with an eager shake of the head.

"You refuse."

"I refuse—and with all my heart."

"You have thought it well over?"

"I have thought it over and I cannot—cannot anyhow contrive to like—"

"Can you give me any reason?" said Don Juan with an expression of mixed feeling which can only be termed stern benevolence.

“One reason! a thousand!” said Gloria with her usual impulsive exaggeration.

“One will satisfy me. Have you duly considered all the merits of this young man?”

“Yes—and I see him to be a *whited sepulchre*.”

“Consider what you are saying.”

“Ah, but you yourself will not fail to discover it before long. All is not gold that glitters. But in fact Don Rafael’s brilliancy seems to me about on a par with that of a lump of chocolate.”

“What a way to speak!” exclaimed Don Juan, not attempting to conceal his vexation. “Do you suppose that you, a chit of a girl, can judge.—But silence, here he comes.”

Don Silvestre and Rafael came in and proceeded to kiss the Bishop’s ring and enquire after his health; then, for a few minutes, nothing was talked of but their journey.

“Here we have a very interesting document,” said Sedeño pointing to another newspaper. “Nothing less than a letter from Ficóbriga, in which is the whole history of the wonderful and unheard-of achievement of Don Silvestre de Romero, in rescuing from the fury of the waves the whole crew of the Plantagenet.”

“Show me, show me!” cried the priest in the

greatest excitement and his eyes sparkling with gratified vanity.

“They exalt you to the skies—here, read it yourself,” said Sedeño, handing the paper to the tonsured athlete. Romero read with a loud voice and clear utterance a prolix report, with endless details, of the feat of June 23d, and when he ended he said :

“That is not bad, not at all bad.”

“Our friend the curé,” said the Bishop in a tone of mild reproof, “is over proud of his beneficent action, and puts it before the world with a dramatic and even theatrical boastfulness which deprives it somewhat of its real merit, and mars its simple and apostolic spontaneity.”

Don Silvestre, somewhat discomfited, bowed respectfully to his superior—for, if the Bishop could say this merely from seeing the complacency with which Romero had read the praises of his prowess, how he would have lectured him had he known that he had written them himself!

“My friends,” said Don Silvestre, “have done their utmost that the world should hear of my manly deed. I have not gone about talking of what I did.”

“That is as it ought to be,” said his Reverence, offering him his hand. “The memory of a kind-

ness ought to be the pleasing task of the person who has received it. Listen only to Señor Morton. How well the praises of your courage sound from his lips."

"And is Don Daniel about to leave us?" asked Romero.

"No," said the Bishop. "With my brother's permission, I have just invited him to remain a fortnight or even a month longer."

Don Juan, who sat thinking deeply while his daughter still stood by his side, raised his head and said:

"Does it not seem to you that a week might be long enough?"

"As you wish—but I have said a fortnight—"

"Well, well, as you wish," said Don Juan. "The most important thing on hand just now is breakfast. Gloria, that food, for pity's sake. You see these two gentlemen want to be off as soon as possible."

"You can go down at once," she said with a beaming face, while her dark eyes sparkled with pleasure and excitement. "Uncle, gentlemen, Señor Rafael."

At the delightful promise of food Sedeño laid down the printed sheet.

"Is Señor Morton coming down to-day?"

“Yes, to-day for the first time,” said his Reverence. “Here he is.”

A dark form stood in the doorway. It was Morton, dressed in black, pale, handsome and emaciated, looking like a martyr of the early ages come to life again in the guise of a Levite.

“Well done, my friend. I congratulate you on your strength,” said the curé going forward to meet the stranger. The Bishop went out leaning on his stick; Daniel offered him an arm and they went down-stairs first; the others followed, Gloria last of all.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TWO OPINIONS AS TO THE MOST RELIGIOUS COUNTRY IN THE WORLD.

Daniel Morton had recovered but a very small portion of his baggage, which had been heavy; but he had saved his money, which had been in the deck-cabin in charge of the captain. The captain had been to see him the day when the shipwrecked crew had left Ficóbriga, and restored to him the money he had received, deducting a certain sum which Daniel gave him in aid of his fellow-sufferers. He then put himself into communication

with the English consul at the nearest large town—distant about ten miles from Ficóbriga—and soon received two large trunks full of clothes. On the day after his first exercise in the open air Morton was bold enough to trust his person in a rickety old vehicle, which, dignified by the name of the coach, went every day to the chief town of the province, churning up the passengers under pretext of conveying them. But in the evening he returned mounted on a fine black horse.

“I went intending to buy a horse, but without much hope of finding one,” said he as he came up to the gate, where the three Lantiguas had lingered for a while after returning from their evening walk. “However, I was able to obtain this animal, which is not an ideal as to beauty and pace, but which goes, at any rate.”

“It looks to me a magnificent beast, worthy of St. James himself, if only it were white,” said Don Angel.

“I should not have thought you would meet with such a good one hereabouts,” said Don Juan examining the steed. “There are very few good beasts in this part of the country.”

Gloria said nothing.

After putting up his horse Morton came up to the sitting-room.

“Now I have a horse,” said he, “I only need a squire.”

And that same evening he agreed with Roque, the house-servant, that a son of his named Gasparuco and who seemed a steady lad, should serve him as groom.

“It would seem that you are getting quite an affection for our part of the country,” said Don Juan to his visitor. “Shall we keep you here much longer?”

“It is very possible I may remain,” replied Morton.

In the course of a very few days the stranger had made intimate acquaintance with every part of Ficóbriga, and particularly with the Abbey, a curious relic of the XIIth century, which, notwithstanding the neglect from which it had suffered and its dilapidated and ruined condition, had many and great charms for the artist. So also had the dismantled citadel, the old tower or keep which stood up and commanded the Abbey precincts, including the cemetery, and some fine old houses formerly belonging to men of rank, some of which were still well worthy of the attention of strangers. The natives of the town stared sympathetically at the young foreigner, and were free enough in their comments, while several men of

the better class, among them Don Juan Amarillo, struck up a friendship with him.

In the home of the Lantiguas, Morton had gained the affectionate regard of both the brothers by his gentle breeding and agreeable conversation, which revealed a very remarkable intelligence without pedantry, a vein of genuine and deep feeling without a trace of affectation, and perfect familiarity with the usages and manners of the best society.

Don Angel did not let the grass grow before he had fully laid his plans for the high emprise he contemplated, bringing into the field all his resolution as an apostle of the Church and the genuine affection he felt for the stranger. And one day he boldly advanced to the attack and opened the subject.

But, unfortunately for the triumph of our sacred creed, the prelate's holy aspirations were devoid of issue. He sat arguing for hours without leading Morton to betray the smallest desire to enter the pale of the Catholic Church and, to add to the venerable Bishop's deep regret, he could not even discover precisely what the stranger's religious views and tenets were; for Morton always spoke in general terms and eluded all personal enquiry. In these discussions—barren as they were unhap-

pily as to any addition to the true fold of the Church—Don Angel was constantly astonished at the knowledge displayed by his interlocutor of all the sacred books, from Genesis to the Apocalypse. Nor was he ignorant of the more illustrious of the early Fathers, and was perfectly familiar with the religious polemics of the present century and of recent times, with the decrees issued by the See of Rome, the dogmas confirmed by the last Council, and all the more recent perils and persecutions of the Church. But beyond all this erudition, which evidently was the result of a genuine study and love of sacred subjects, the good prelate could extract nothing to the point, and this occasioned him the keenest regret. At last he began to think of giving up the undertaking, reflecting that God would no doubt choose some other means and opportunity for shedding His light on the soul of this heretic.

As to Don Juan, though at first he had listened with keen interest to these religious discussions, he soon gave it up, lest they should take up too much time from the work he had on his own hands. Full of eagerness and zeal he devoted himself without relaxation to reading and literary work, imbibing learning from his books and pouring it out again on foolscap; and his whole soul was so entirely

given up to this occupation, that no mortal power could tear him from his study for four hours every morning and as many more in the evening. His brother would reproach him affectionately for this fevered and excessive toil, which was exhausting his really exceptional powers, irritating his brain and undermining his physical strength, and in fact Don Juan's health was waning day by day. However, he paid no heed to the episcopal admonitions and persisted in living among his books, sucking out their marrow to disgorge it afterwards in writing, in full confidence that his unflagging application would result in one of the greatest works of the present day.

One morning, however, Don Juan was so overdone, his head feeling heavier than lead, that he quitted his room to try whether a conversation with Morton would refresh him. When he reached the foreigner's sitting-room he was surprised to find that Don Angel was not with him, for the polemical discussion was commonly carried on at this hour.

"What!" said Don Juan with a smile, "I see that my worthy brother has been forced to raise the siege."

"His Reverence the Bishop," said Morton, "is so good and so learned that he will certainly take

many a fortress yet. Those he fails to take are no doubt impregnable.”

Starting from this point Don Juan ventured to ask him whether his own beliefs, be they what they might, were immutable. Daniel did not hesitate to reply that they were not superficial, articles coldly held as a matter of course, like those of the greater number of Spanish Catholics, but, on the contrary, deep and strong; to which Don Juan replied that he would rather see tenacity and logical persistency even in a false creed, than lukewarm indifference in those who had the happiness to be born to the true faith; and he added that no doubt belief had sadly diminished even in catholic Spain, but that, as the root of the evil lay in revolutionary extravagance and the mischievous influence of foreigners who were envious of the most christian country in the world, there would be an easy remedy in sermons and speeches and in the labors of the Hierarchy, if only they could establish a religious government to support and encourage them.

Morton did not seem altogether to agree in this opinion. Nevertheless, out of politeness to his generous friend, he said that he had all confidence in the regeneration of a country which was so rich in men as virtuous and as illustrious as

Don Angel among its priesthood and Don Juan among its laity.

“ I am very well acquainted with the south of Spain,” he said, “ and with the capital. I do not know whether the north will prove the same, but there, my dear sir, I must confess that the religious feeling that came under my notice was so perfunctory and lifeless that the Spaniards have disgusted me. Do not be offended at the frankness of my speech. In no country in the world is there less true faith ; while in none, on the other hand, is there so much pretension to it. Not only the French and Belgian Catholics, but Protestants of every sect, Jews, nay and Mohammedans, carry their belief into practice with more genuine fervor than the Spaniards. I have seen what goes on in your great cities, which seem to regulate the tone of feeling throughout the country, and I have been astounded at the irreligion of the upper classes. The middle class, with rare exceptions, are simply indifferent. They go through the services of the church but as a matter of routine—out of regard to public opinion, to family feeling, or to tradition, rather than from any genuine belief. The women throw themselves into extravagant devotion, while the men fly from church as much as possible, and the greater number altogether give up the practice

of even the most elementary duties prescribed by Catholic dogma. I do not deny that many attend mass—of course provided it is short—and that there is no lack of pretty girls to be seen as they come out of church—but all this is very easy work, my friend.—Do not you see that this is not enough to entitle them to say: ‘We are the most religious nation on the face of the earth?’”

“No; it is not enough—no,” said Don Juan, sadly and with downcast eyes.

“You yourself know many men, men of mark, good, loyal souls. whom you cannot but regard as virtuous; persons to whom you, as a good Catholic, would not refuse your friendship; persons whom no one avoids or regards with aversion—kind, amiable—”

“I know what you are going to say!” interrupted Don Juan sadly.

“Very well—and these persons—perhaps you know more than a thousand of them—when do you suppose they fulfil the radical and rudimentary duties prescribed to Catholics—confession and penance?”

“Oh! you are right—you are right,” said Lantigua in a tone of sincere lamentation. Out of every hundred, ninety-five do not confess once in twenty years.”

“And the Church,” added Morton, “enjoins confession at least once a year. Thus the strict and impeccable Catholics, those we may call the elect—I am speaking only of the men, my dear sir—think themselves in a state of grace because they fulfil this required duty once a year, forgetting that the Church recommends confession once a month, and that those who do not comply are lax in their faith and in danger of damnation! Ought you not in conscience to regard them as being in peril, if not completely lost?”

“But the injunction, the precept, Señor Morton,” said Don Juan rather stiffly, “only requires once a year.”

“There is another symptom,” continued Daniel, “which I have repeatedly observed. When prayers are being said in a household, the men take themselves off without the women being in the least uneasy about it. I have heard the children innocently ask: ‘Tell me, mamma, why does not papa say his prayers?’ Often the mother has no answer ready; sometimes she says: ‘Papa says his prayers in his own room.’ But in reality his prayers are said in the casino or the billiard-room. In fact most of the women think that, so long as they are devout, it does not matter if their husbands blaspheme. I may add, and I do not think

you will take offence at it, that Spain is not merely the most blasphemous country in the world, but actually *the* land of blasphemy and sacrilege."

"There again you are right," said Lantigua gloomily, "and I acknowledge the irreligion. But you seem to hint that the causes of this serious evil lie in something else than philosophic doubt and the modern spirit of liberty."

"True, for I cannot suppose that these two things can have deprived the lower classes in Spain of their religious beliefs. In other countries we find philosophy more, infinitely more widely diffused than here, and far, far more liberty; and nevertheless the religious spirit is not dead. You talk of revolutions! You have never had one in Spain worthy of the name, my friend. In Spain all your political changes have been mere storms in a tea-cup. Good God! what idea must we form of the religious spirit of a country which can be overthrown by the fifteen or twenty petty political changes which have taken place since 1812? I quite understand that the most vast and securest edifices should be shaken to the ground in an earthquake, but they ought not to crumble down at the vibration produced by a troop of trampling cavalry. Admitting, as we must, that Spain has never gone through any tremendous

cataclysm, we are forced to conclude that the fallen structure was not a very solid one. It was so once, long ago; but at the beginning of the century it was already undermined. Spain is like the contentious woman spoken of by Solomon, while 'through idleness the house droppeth through.'"

"But I cannot admit that we have had no revolutions," said Don Juan. "We have had both superficial and radical changes in the political order.—And then consider the flood of literature, the social revulsion, the tide of presumption, the love of luxury, of money-getting and of materialism which have come to us from other countries."

"I see indeed that many things which are harmless elsewhere here turn to poison," said Daniel. "The moral organism of Spain is as feeble as that of those sickly and hypersensitive beings which die poisoned by a mere baleful odor."

"An odor?"

"Aye, a mere odor; for you have as yet nothing more than that of the vast industrial progress, the luxury, the colossal increase of wealth and all the material refinements of life. Spain, as I see her, cannot exist without sheltering herself within the lantern tower of Catholicism, for fear

anything should touch or contaminate her or any atom of external influence should reach her."

"And what do you prescribe for her?"

"Fresh air," said Morton vehemently, "open air, free exercise under every wind that blows from above or below; freedom to be dragged and buffeted, helped or hindered by all the forces that are abroad. Let her tear off her mendicant's hood, her grave-clothes and winding-sheet, and stand forth in the bracing storms of the century. Spain is like a man who is ill from sheer apprehension, and cannot stir for blisters, plasters, bandages and wraps. Away with all this paraphernalia and the body will recover its tone and vigor."

The discussion had come to a point at which Don Juan, regarding his guest as altogether wrong, began to weary of it.

"You let your imagination run away with your reason," he said, in a good-humored but dictatorial tone.—"In this way you might go so far as to prove that Spain is the least religious country in the world. But, friend Morton, have you not happened to see anything which might tend to prove the contrary?"

"There is absolutely no meaning for me" replied Morton, "in the theatrical display of devotional ceremonials which are political rather than

religious. I think very little of the piety of a people who, as at Madrid, talk a great deal about religion and yet have never known how to raise a single temple worthy—I will not say of God—but of the men who worship in it. In Madrid, a wealthy capital, there are as many theatres as in London, an amphitheatre for bull-fights which is magnificent, superb cafés and shops, promenades and entertainments where art and luxury meet to combine; and there is not a single church that is better than a pig-sty.”

“By Heaven! Señor Morton that is too hard.”

“A little hard I admit,” said Morton laughing, “but not far from the truth. And what is true of Madrid is true of all Spain. The Catholic feeling which during this century has not erected a single religious edifice of average dignity and merit, is so lukewarm throughout that it is not discoverable in any conspicuous or useful issues. The most pious country has sunk to being the most infidel; the most religious country, in which at one time piety was intimately associated with all the noblest aspects of life—with heroic deeds, with the arts, with lordly wealth, even with the conduct of war—has ended by regarding piety as a thing by itself, excluded and apart from everything else.

A man so devout as to cross himself with holy-water as he enters a church, to confess and communicate every week, is regarded in most circles as simply ridiculous."

"Bless me, friend Morton!"

"Señor de Lantigua, forgive me my boldness—I feel it must be said. Answer me with the frankness of a man of honor and a sincere Catholic. Tell me, is there in all Spain a woman capable of giving her heart and her hand to a man who spends three or four hours a day in church, who castigates his sins by scourging, who has his house full of holy-water cups, who puts up a prayer over the most trifling actions of his life, such as going in to a house, going out of it again, sneezing, coughing—what not. A devout man on the pattern accepted by the strictly pious communities of the present day is a purely ridiculous creature—you must confess it. And those nobler spirits who are the sincere and staunch advocates of religion, and call themselves soldiers in the ranks of Christ, take every care in general society to conceal their orthodoxy as far as possible, or rather to forget it, or they run the risk of losing the sympathy and friendship which they have gained by their talents, their position, or their virtues."

“There is something in what you say—but not so much as you think my friend.”

“‘Lookers-on see most of the game.’ Those who always live at home observe less keenly than strangers;” said Morton. “Perhaps I may be mistaken, but at any rate I have expressed my opinion in all sincerity. I believe Spain to be the most irreligious country in the world. And a country like this, where unbelief has wrought such ruin, which has so much to learn, which must make such tremendous efforts only to keep itself alive and to infuse some vigorous blood into the veins now filled with a colorless and innutritious fluid, is not in a position to convert others.”

For a few minutes Don Juan was silent, but at last he said with a certain asperity which was characteristic of the man :

“I do not pretend to maintain that my own country is the most religious in the world. Unhappily there is much truth in part of what you have said ; still, I must believe that if we extended our discussion we should find as bad, or perhaps worse, symptoms of dissolution in any other country which you might quote as a model. We have in Spain an immense number of indifferent or even perverse spirits, but we still preserve intact the treasures of our doctrine and dogma ; we cherish

the seed and a period of divine sunshine and favor may bring it to fruition. In the midst of the torpor and frivolity which we see on all sides Faith dwells pure and intact, untouched and untainted by error; and Faith must triumph, Faith must result in virtue, if not to-day—to-morrow.

“I lament, deeply, the sins and crimes of my country; still, I cannot think that they are as irremediable as death, as the slough which is the fundamental soil of other nations though delusively hidden under a growth of prosperity, and order, of artistic, industrial, and social success. Each nationality has its own characteristic organization. I know not whether God will grant to me to see the day of regeneration; but, I warn you, do not seek that regeneration outside the immutable principles of Catholic morality. From the ruins of society only that can grow again which shall have preserved the germ of that morality, and it is we who cherish it—we Señor Morton, though you fail to detect it.

“Away with all revolutions, small or great, with incendiary ideas which come to us from other countries, where their application is but fallacious and transitory; away with all your preachings of doctrines intrinsically opposed to our indigenous social needs; and then you will see that this nation,

once resuscitated and set on its feet after so many years of catalepsy, will be ready once more to convert all the peoples in the old and the new world; yes, sir, to convert them; because, as sole possessor of the truth she will have the right to speak and to act upon it boldly."

Daniel was on the point of replying when they heard voices in the garden, and mingling with the voices the wailing and crying of children.

"What is that?" exclaimed Lantigua going to the window. "Gloria, Gloria!"

Morton followed him to the window.

"It is nothing," said Don Juan coming away. "It is Caifás' children who have come to ask help for their father—a rascal, an idle vagabond that I am tired of helping."

But his Reverence called up from the garden, "Juan, Juan, come down."

"Let us go," said Don Juan. "My brother has interfered and wants me to go down and take the part of the miserable wretch. He is a miserable creature—but Christian charity, friend Daniel, requires us to forgive and be merciful."

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN ACT OF CHARITY.

THEY both went down to the garden where Don Angel was confronting a weariful trio of weeping children, who stood before him with their fists in their eyes, their little faces streaming with a mixture of tears and dirt that resulted in a kind of mud.

“Come, come, let us see, what is the matter?” said Don Juan gently pulling the little girl’s ear; but she could not answer for crying.

“The curé in charge has turned Caifás out, by Don Silvestre’s orders,” said his Reverence. “But my children, if your father is so bad how can you wish that he should be in the church.”

“A pretty specimen is Mundideo!” exclaimed Don Juan. “And what is happening now? Has he lost all his things because he cannot pay up?”

“Yes—se—se—se—señor,” sobbed Sildo.

“And Don Juan Amarillo has kicked him out of his house and is going to bring him to justice?”

“Yes—se—señor.”

“And you have been left without a home?”

“Yes—se—señor.”

“These poor children are destitute,” said Don Angel. “We must give them some clothes.”

“Gloria will see to that; where is Gloria?”

“She is gone out into the road to speak to Caifás, who would not come in because he was ashamed.”

“And with very good reason. I will not do anything for him; I am tired of being kind to him. I will give him food, and clothing for his children, nothing more.”

Gloria at this moment came in at the garden-gate. Her red eyes showed the distress she was in.

“Papa,” said she, drying away her tears, “Caifás is here, outside. He says he wants to speak to you, and he wants to tell you what has happened, if it is not troubling you too much.”

“Poor man!” said Lantigua, with a glance at Morton. “But I would rather, Gloria, that you should tell me what has happened to this vagabond fellow.”

“Well, they have turned him out of his place as sexton.”

“And he has well deserved it.”

“And Don Juan Amarillo has laid hands on the only property he has—his carpenter’s tools.”

“Just so—since unless Don Juan gets the money Caifás will spend it in drink.”

“And since yesterday he and his children have been begging by the road-side.”

“Ah?” said Don Juan, “That is enough; here charity must step in. Give them something to eat. You may give orders that the children are to have something sent to them every day.”

“Oh, they will come for it!” said Gloria with much glee.

“No, with such a man for their father I will not have them set foot in my house.”

“But, my dear papa—”

“He is a wretch. The children may come.”

“And you shall clothe them at my cost, Gloria,” said His Reverence, “and I will give some to Caifás as well. It is with reference to the unfortunate that it is written: ‘Give and it shall be given unto you.’”

“But giving them money only encourages them in vice,” said Don Juan. “Do not you think so, Señor Morton?”

“Undoubtedly.”

“Come, Juan,” said the Bishop laying his hand on his brother’s shoulder. “At the farthest end of the field by Cortiguerra, close by the corn-

field, there is an empty hut where the goats and sheep used to take shelter in the winter."

"Well, well," said Don Juan smiling benevolently, "I think I know what you are aiming at."

"Yes, papa — well; the hut at Cortiguerra, though it has not much more than half a roof, will be a palace for poor Caifás."

"A perfect palace!" said his Reverence. "Do you know where it is, Señor Morton? Out there, beyond that little hill where you see those five chestnut-trees which the people hereabout call the *Five Commandments*."

Morton looked while the Bishop pointed with his stick.

"Very good, then let him move into the house."

"Good, Juan, well said. Now, children, you may be off; Señorita Gloria will give you something to cover your bodies."

Gloria flew out to announce the good news to the hapless Mundideo, and the children ran after her. When she returned, Don Angel had gone in talking to Sedeño, who was discussing the letters that had just come in, and Don Juan was with the masons who were still repairing the chapel. Morton was alone in the garden; Gloria, finding herself alone with him, had a little qualm of doubtful

feeling: should she stay or withdraw? and when their guest came towards her with the evident purpose of addressing her, she could not help quivering with agitation, as a ray of light does when the water from which it is reflected is stirred.

“Gloria,” said Morton. “How happy are the poor of Ficóbriga!”

“Yes, and why?” asked the girl tremulously.

“Because you care for them.”

“But that wretched Caifás is so miserable—he has the character of being full of vice and evil, and really he is a thoroughly good soul; I could do no less than take his part. And then he is so fond of me; he would go to the stake for me.”

“That I can well believe. Die for you! Ah! Gloria, I would do it gladly.”

“What! what are you saying?” cried the girl greatly troubled.

“That I would die for you.—It is all that is left to me after having loved you.”

“Good God! Daniel—”

“Gloria, how can I tell you so as to make you believe me?” His handsome face was full of grave passion.

“I must go—” cried Gloria suddenly. She saw the eager feeling which glowed in her friend’s

blue eyes, she fathomed the force and depth of that which surged up from the bottom of her own soul, and they terrified her.

“ You are going ? ” said Daniel taking a step towards her.

“ I must, ” she said.

“ Not without hearing me say one thing. ”

“ What is that ? ”

“ Gloria, that I love you. ”

And twice before Morton had told her this—but not in the same words, nor with such burning vehemence as now.

CHAPTER XXV.

ANOTHER.

TWO days after this little scene, and after breakfast, Gloria was very busy in her own room. She had sallied out early to buy cloth and stuff, and now was turning over her own clothes to pick out what might be suitable to clothe Mundideo's destitute children. The Bishop then entered, saying to her, as he showed her a paper roll of money :

“ Here little niece this is all I can give you.

These revolutionary times keep us poor Bishops on short commons."

"Oh uncle, how good you are! All this?" cried Gloria, pouring the silver out of the paper in which it had been wrapped. "This is a perfect fortune; with this and what I have, I can get Caifás back his mattresses, part of his clothes and his tools that he may set to work again like an honest man."

"Your plan is excellent; I am sorry I have no more, I have hunted through my exchequer, my child, and turned out my purse and cannot find another coin. Do you not see that I have no ready money? Last winter the poor monks of * * * emptied my money box; hapless creatures! I wish I had had thousands to give them."

"God bless you a thousand times!" exclaimed the girl with pious enthusiasm.

"I am not of your father's opinion," said his Reverence, "that this unfortunate Mundideo should have no money at all. Money is indispensable to all, and if—as you say and I am ready to believe, he is not a reprobate but rather a poor weak creature, it is right that we should help him out of his misery. You must convince him of the necessity of being economical, steady and on his guard."

"It is his wife, his infamous wife who is to blame for all."

“Infamous! nay, do not use such an epithet to any human being without you are very certain of it being deserved,” said Don Angel in gentle reproof.

“You are right uncle,” said the girl modestly. “But indeed his wife is not good. Every one says she is a good-for-nothing creature.”

“And will you send these things and the money to the poor man?”

“I will take them myself.”

“And I would go with you, with pleasure. The only real happiness in this world, my child, is that we give to others.”

“Well, will you not come?”

“No, I have other things to do. First I must go to prayers and then I have to dispatch the courier to Tresestellas. I must attend to the business of my diocese. Go yourself and enjoy the delightful toil of charity my child. I must stay here.”

Not long after Gloria put on her broad hat and set out. She went across the little green and down an alley bordered by fig-trees and brambles, and over a fine large common which spread in front of the house and was intersected by two or three paths. She walked with her eyes fixed on the ground, slowly, stopping at intervals, as if the thoughts

which absorbed her rose up before her from time to time and would not let her pass; and now and then she looked skywards, watching the cruising clouds of birds, and following them with her eyes in their rapid wheeling till they rose so high as to be mere quivering specks against the vault of blue. She passed the spot where stood the five chestnuts, quaintly called the *Commandments*; venerable trees and deeply scarred with the pruning of a hundred seasons; for the injuries inflicted by the axe are productive of much blessing—in so far, that is to say, as chestnuts are concerned. Then she crossed a field where the young maize-plants supported the clinging stems of the frail kidney-bean and her feet got entangled in the lazy, crawling gourds and pumpkins. This led to a descent which shut out the view of the house of the Lantiguas, and indeed of all Ficóbriga, excepting the tower. Here three cows were feeding and stood looking at her as she passed, but did not molest her; and then, entering a little clearing in the midst of the brambles, furze and ferns, Gloria found herself in Mundideo's domain.

As she approached the spot she heard him singing: "Mundideo is very cheerful?" said she to herself.

The three children rushed to meet and hail her.

“Señorita Gloria — Señorita Gloria,” they shouted. Caifás came out of the house, which was indeed but a hovel, and seeing that the children’s news was true he flung his hammer into the air, and from his huge mouth, open as round and as wide as a pannier, came a jolly laugh of delight.

“Señorita Gloria! Angel from Heaven! Our Lady of Grace! welcome to my house. Oh! how welcome!” he shouted.

“You seem merry.”

Mundideo, finding laughter inadequate to express his joy, cut a caper in the air.

“All this laughing and capering,” said Gloria gravely, as she seated herself on a stone near the hut, “but ill become a man who is so miserable and who has suffered so much loss and trouble.”

“But if I am not miserable, if I have had no losses, if joy and comfort are being showered down upon me!”

“Come, come, you are out of your wits,” said Gloria opening the bundle of clothes she had been carrying. “See here, if you promise me to be very careful, very steady and industrious, I will help you with a little—” and she showed him the paper containing the silver pieces.

“Money!—And suppose I want for nothing, suppose I am rich.”

“Rich, you!” said Gloria somewhat vexed. “Do not try to laugh at me.”

“Laugh at you, you—my angel from Heaven? But what I say is true, *Señorita*,” said Mundideo assuming a business-like air. “You thought all my things and my bedding were in pawn; nothing of the kind—they are here. You thought my tools had been seized; nothing of the kind—I have them all here. You thought I owed money to Don Juan Amarillo; nothing of the kind—here are his receipts for payment of the same.”

“You have paid him?”

“Four hundred and thirty-two pesos.* That was what my debt had run up to from a loan of a thousand reals, with the increasing interest it had mounted, mounted—like the smoke of incense that never stops till it has reached the roof and filled the church.”

“You are crazy.”

“I thought I was crazy yesterday when—”

“You have recovered all your things and settled your affairs?” said Gloria puzzled and astonished. “Explain this miracle.”

“That is the very word for it, *Señorita*, my angel!” exclaimed José with enthusiastic fervor. “A miracle, I always believed in miracles, but I

* The peso is a fraction more than a dollar.

certainly did long to see one and have often said to myself: 'why are there no miracles now-a-days?' Well, Señorita darling, and yesterday I saw a miracle."

"What, have you found a hidden treasure?" said Gloria laughing.

"No, that is not it; the treasure came and found me. God—"

"Do not name God in the same breath with a lottery.—You drew the first prize?"

"I never, never gambled."

"But then—"

"God," repeated Mundideo.

"God! He does not pour money out haphazard on the first comer."

"I thought the same, still you cannot deny that He gives us each day our daily bread."

"I do not deny it."

"Well, He has given me all at once not merely the bread for to-day, the bread for a year, but bread for all my life.—I fell on my knees and I said: Lord thou hast said: 'ask and it shall be given unto you.' Very good—how is that, I ask and ask again and thou givest me nothing—and not ten minutes after I said this, a miracle! a miracle!"

“José, you are deceiving me. Show me Don Juan Amarillo’s receipted bond.”

Mundideo ran into the house. Sildo and Paquillo had slipped away and Gloria was left alone with little Celinina—a diminutive name for Marcelina.

“Who came here yesterday?” she asked the child, and interpreting her indistinct lisping she gathered.

“A gentleman.”

“What was he like?”

“A nice gentleman, pretty gentleman.”

“And how did he come?”

“Horse—gee-gee,” said the child.

“On a horse? and where from, show me.” Celinina lifted her wee hand and with look of pious devotion she said quite distinctly.

“The sky.”

Mundideo had brought out the receipts and gave them to Gloria.

“The long and the short of it is you have found a friend, some good soul has come to the rescue.”

“Much more than that Señorita, it was a miracle.”

“There are no such things as miracles—it was a person, a human being,” said Gloria impatiently.

"Now you have to tell me who it was that performed such an act of charity."

The man looked steadily in Gloria's face, but his expression was one of real trouble.

"Well, are you struck dumb? speak."

"I cannot."

"Why not?"

"Because he forbid me. I knew you would be vexed—but I cannot tell you what you want to know."

Gloria thought in silence for awhile.

"I understand," she said at last, "Christ has said: 'Let not thy right hand—'"

"Know what thy left hand doeth," added José. "Ah! every one is not like the Señor Curé, who, when he gives money to the poor, or distributes stale fish, or pulls a bad swimmer out of the sea, sends a rhodomontade history of it all, to all the papers in Madrid."

"Who, who can it have been?" said Gloria in a tone of intense anxiety, and she hugged the parcel she held to her bosom as if she were possessed with an aching desire to clasp some one to her heart.

"I cannot tell you indeed," repeated Mundi-deo looking down.

"And if I guess, and guess right, will you say yes?"

“Well—”

“It was Señor Morton.”

“Ah Señorita Gloria!—why, why ‘did you guess? The stranger, the man off the steam-ship; I do not know his name, but the foreigner who is so like our Saviour.”

“No one can be like the Saviour. Do not utter blasphemy.”

“But his face is like Him and he obeys Him in his deeds—that is true is it not—but, oh Señorita my darling, I have done wrong. He made me swear I would let no one know. Still, you are no one, Señorita Gloria, that is to say you were not meant when he said ‘no one’—because you are an angel, and our Lady of Grace.”

“I will not reveal the secret,” said the girl controlling her agitation which almost stopped her breath. “Tell me, how did he come, when, what did he say to you?”

“He did not say much. He knew all about me; he asked me how much I owed—Ah! how many times have I sung in the choir: ‘Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in’—but Caifás the ugly, Caifás the wicked—little did he think the gates would open before him to let in the King of Glory; and yet I have seen it;

seen, as I may say, the heavens open wide when that man said to me 'take this' and gave me all at once everything I could want."

"He is very rich," said Gloria.

"He must be much richer than Don Juan Amarillo, and nevertheless—when my benefactor, sent to me from Heaven, put out his hand and put the money here, in mine, and closed my fist upon it with his own fingers, I stared at him and thought I was dreaming. I lost my head, and did not even know how to thank him. Then I fell on my knees, and cried and kissed his feet; and he lifted me up and threw his arms round me—why should he do that Señorita!—hugged me, and declared he had done nothing particular or out of the way."

"And neither blamed you for your faults, nor told you to be good for the future?"

"He said: 'You have not meant to do wrong, but you have been unfortunate; be honest and industrious!' Nothing more. I thought God himself had appeared in my house, and when the gentleman had left on his horse, I fell on my knees again."

"And he said nothing more? He did not speak—"

Gloria paused abruptly as if she could not command the words to express herself.

“Of what?”

“Of any one else? Because he might have done so—try and remember; did he say nothing?”—

“Of what?”

“Nothing about—for instance, about me?” She struggled to affect a perfectly simple manner.

“I remember every word he said as distinctly as if I heard them now, and he said nothing, nothing at all about you.”

Gloria rose from her seat.

“Although you do not need it,” she said, “I brought this for you, and I will leave it with you.”

“Although I do not need it, I will keep it as the work of your angelic hands, and I will give it to some one poorer than I am now. Oh! how happy I am, *Señorita*! If I were ever so wicked, I would turn good now. I am hard at work, and Don Juan shall not repent of having given me this hut, for I am patching it up finely.”

Gloria did not stop to look at Mundideo’s great works in carpentry: “Good-bye,” she said. “Let me embrace you.”

“*Señorita Gloria*! Good Heavens!” exclaimed José drawing back.

“Did not your benefactor, and why not I?” And before Mundideo could prevent her Gloria had clasped him in her arms.

“Now,” she said in an excited voice. “Now you must be honest, sober, and industrious—” and even as she spoke she hurried away from the hut.

As she walked home, she did not see the cows that gazed at her as she passed, nor the waving maize; nor the five chestnuts with their generous load of fruit even in their old age, like patriarchs surrounded by progeny; nor the tower of Ficóbriga as it rose above the slope, nor the clouds of birds that swept across the sky. She saw nothing but the blinding glory of a blazing sun that had risen on her soul, and which, mounting in that wide vault had to-day reached the zenith and flooded it with radiance.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE REBELLIOUS ANGEL.

IN the evening after supper, the meal ‘that refreshes the spirit and inspires love,’ prayers were said as usual in the dining-room, and the weather being fine the door was left open. During this pious act Morton would always go out, but he remained sitting in the garden with his head respectfully uncovered. After this the evening

passed in pleasant conversation, some of the neighbors frequently joining them, and then they separated for the night. Gloria was usually the last to go upstairs, and soon after she had shut and bolted her door, silence reigned throughout the house. Wrapped in the 'trailing garments of the night,' and in calm contentment, it slept the voiceless and tranquil sleep of the just.

But upstairs, in the corner-room, Gloria's thoughts were too busy for sleep, and her wide-open eyes gazed into the darkness. The rush of the fountain, the croaking of the frogs and, from time to time, the wooing whisper of the breeze, filled the girl's brain with a wild and fanciful rhythm which added to the excitement of her imagination. Her right arm she flung over her face, hiding it as a bird hides its head under its wing; and there, alone, with no witness but God, from time to time she opened the doors of her heart to give air to the fire that was consuming it—threw open the floodgates of her soul that her thoughts might overflow as they would. Thus she lay through long hours of the night, at first quiet enough, and then feverish with wakefulness, till towards daybreak sleep sealed her eyes, and her breath came quietly and softly from her little white bed.

One of these nights as she lay with her head under her wing, having put out the light, she said to herself:

“He said to me to-day, ‘I was born under an evil star Gloria, I foresee misfortune. My heart warns me that no good fortune awaits us. Do you feel any confidence?’ And I answered him: ‘Confidence in God’—and how sadly he spoke! ‘Often do men call upon Him and He answers them not; and how many times has He permitted the most devoted love to result in misery through the wickedness of men.’ What could I say. Great God I tremble! I am happy and I am in torment—I hope and I am afraid. I cannot help thinking that I am like the wild flowers in the fields, which are so pretty and so happy, although, as it seems to me, they must always feel tremulous and half-frightened, if only of the crushing-foot of the ox that grazes near—I tremble too, I hear the trampling foot that is to crush me!

“To-day when he went out riding, ah! he was so long gone. I thought he was never coming back, a black cloud seemed to settle down upon me, and crush and darken my life. Then, when I saw him come, when I heard the horse’s hoofs on the stones in the old court-yard, the sun shone on

all the world again; I do not know how it is.—How strange it seems. I remember that at times when I have been very unhappy, when my little brothers died for instance, everything seemed sad. The very trees and sky looked melancholy, the house, Francisca, my father, my room, my clothes—every place was dismal; the garden, the balcony, even the clatter of meals, the chatter of the birds, the magnolia walk and the road, the posts of the telegraph line, the Abbey clock, the clouds, the boats, and my home duties, needle-work and the piano—everything was as sad to me as I was myself, and seemed full of my misery; and now, everything is full of him.

“It is ten days since he told me that—but my heart knew it long before. It is six days since he asked me for an answer—but he knew it, he must have known, for whenever he spoke to me he must have seen all my soul in my eyes. Many days have we stood talking, mere empty words, on my part pure folly; then at last I could pretend no longer, and just as light rushes in at a door when it is opened, the words rushed from my lips and I told him, how could I help it? that I loved him with all my soul, for all my life. I am not ashamed of it—my conscience is easy, God is on my side, I feel it—I am sure of it. I can

see the mighty hand which signs the cross on my heart in token of blessing.

“‘Gloria,’ he said, ‘may curses fall upon me and upon my father, if I ever cease to love you. But my heart had known you long, long ago, and when first I saw you it seemed to me, not that I met you, but that I had found you!’ And my heart was waiting for him as for its other self, its brother that had gone away and must return. Never has he said a single word that could vex or disappoint me. Never have I seen him move without feeling more in love with him than ever. His person is perfect, his heart overflowing with kindness that seems inexhaustible; his intelligence is like the sun which illuminates all it falls upon, his whole nature sweet and gentle, his gaiety never offends any one, his speech is always refined.—He loves me; oh! and I adore him.—Well, then, I ask Heaven and earth, God and men: Why should not this man be my husband? Why should we not be united and be one in all the paths of daily life, as we are already in spirit? as we shall always be, and nothing can prevent it. Why indeed? Answer me, why?”

And as there was none to reply, Gloria answered herself, aloud, as though she were not alone:

“He shall be my husband.”

And another night she spoke aloud :

“Religion ! Religion, which exists for none but good ends, which is revealed to us by God, which is the first necessary of our existence and the light of the soul—Religion is to me a fount of utter bitterness. It stands between us as the edge of a dividing sword. No one can thrust it aside—no one can crumble into dust the wall that stands between us, and against which our arms will be broken when we try to join hands forever. For I know my father—he is a rock.

“Curses on Martin Luther and the Reformation, Philip the Second and William of Orange, the Elector of God-knows-where, the peace of Westphalia, the revolution of Heaven-knows-when, the Syllabus—all my father heaped upon me this evening. This it is that has hampered our lives and cut the thread that binds us together, and not God, the creator of hearts and of virtue and love ; not God but men, who with their disputes, their quarrels, their hatred and their ambitions have split up creeds and destroyed the work of Christ, and who would have made us all of one mind. I cannot think how any noble mind can endure to read a book of history—a bog of pestilence full of horrors and blood and tears. I would

have everything forgotten and all those books flung into the fire, so that the past should not govern the present, and all these differences in a mere form of words should perish forever. I asked papa: 'Is he not good? Does he break God's laws?' Should I love him as I do if he did? Has he not a noble soul? What makes him different from me? Nothing—nothing but an empty name invented by evil souls to keep up a feud. Ah!—never tell me! Those that love each other are of the same faith. They cannot have separate creeds, and if they have, love will rebaptize them both in the same waters of Jordan. Leave all differences of sects to those who hate each other; if you look at it honestly there are indeed but two religions—that of the good and that of the wicked. All the good belong to Jesus; the wicked may all follow Barrabas. But to suppose that Daniel is not a follower of Christ—that he is not of the religion of the good—impossible! impossible!

"And yet, if I say all this to-morrow by the light of day they will laugh me to scorn. I, O Almighty God! I see it as plainly as daylight, as certainly as that Thou dost exist, as that I myself am alive—and I cannot say it without being thought mad by all the wise-heads."

And as these thoughts rushed through her

excited brain, again she heard the inner voice which so long ago had stirred her spirit to pride and self-assertion. "Arise, rebel, fear nothing. Your mind is clear and powerful; throw off this brutalizing slavishness, throw off the cowardice which crushes you, and show a bold face against the prejudices, the errors, the false ideas which surround you on all sides. You are capable of great things, rise and assert yourself; nothing compels you to remain a child. You might soar to the stars, do not cling to the earth."

She heard the voice and she said:

"Yes, it is true. I am superior to my father and to my uncle. I hear them talk, talk abundantly in all the learned phraseology they borrow from books, and in my heart I say: 'there is one single word which would reduce all your words to nothingness.' They are good words and spoken in all good faith, but there is no love in them, love that binds and that loosens. I can see it all, I can touch it, grasp it. I cannot be deceived for a divine light follows and guides me; I love, and the shadows which darken their vision vanish before me. Yes, I will dare all—I have been a hypocrite; I let my wings be cut and when they began to grow again, I behaved as though I had none—I have pretended to subject my thoughts to the

thoughts of others, and to quench my soul, to crush it within a narrow round. But no more of it! The sky is not of the space of a looking-glass—it is vast and high. I will free myself from this cocoon in which I am imprisoned, for the hour of my escape has struck and God says to me: ‘Come forth; I have bid you to shine, like the sun, with a light of your own and not to reflect the light of others, like a pail of water.’”

Bitter tears were soaking into her pillow, her brain was in an aching tumult, and the pulses in her temples throbbed like the bass chords of a harp struck by a powerful hand. Every instinct of her nature rose up to resist.

“Rebel, rebel!—Woe upon you if you do not!” And quite incapable of remaining quiet any longer, she rose from bed, and went feeling vaguely about in the utter darkness with trembling and fevered hands.

“Where—where is it, where art Thou? My Lord and Saviour?” she said—and at last her hand fell on the marble crucifix which filled the place of honor in her room.

“Great Saviour!” she cried aloud. “And dost Thou permit this? Is this what Thou hast died for, in anguish on the awful cross? Is this the fulfilment of Thy law?”

She groaned, and her head sank on her breast, and covering her eyes with her hands, she wept over the bitter cup of this experience. There were but two ways open to her: Resignation or Rebellion.

The first rays of dawn, piercing the cracks in the blinds, fell on the graceful and lightly-clad figure of the poor lovelorn child, and with a shudder of cold and of sudden realization she crept back to bed again, and presently fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HE GOES.

ONE morning Don Juan de Lantigua said to his brother:

“Twenty-six days has this stranger been within our gates. You heard what he said last night?”

“Yes—that although he was our grateful friend, his sense of propriety prompted him to ask our leave to depart. He knows very well that we do not wish it, still, he does not want to abuse our hospitality.”

“Although I told him last night that he should

remain a few days longer, I do not think I will press him much. What do you think?"

"I think it as well."

"Indeed, is that so?" said Don Juan ironically. "Are you satisfied with your conquest? These Protestants, my good brother, though they are very quiet about it, are very tenacious of their heresy. There is nothing for it but to leave them alone."

"I do not believe it," said his Reverence. "It is our duty to try to tempt the straying sheep back into the fold—to call them, to run after them. If after all, they will not come—"

"You see how little result your efforts have had."

"How do we know? I have not lost hope. I have spoken and he listened to me. I sowed the Divine word—who can tell that it may not some day germinate."

Don Juan shook his head doubtfully.

"Well, for the present at any rate," said he, "it is as well that he should go. It is in no way fitting that this man should stop any longer in my house. We shall lose a delightful companion, but it is right that he should go. He is not wanting in superficial charm, he has in everything a brilliancy which fascinates and charms his company.

Now I have a daughter who is not a little impressionable—”

“What! you are afraid that Gloria—!”

“Nay, nay, I fear nothing.—How can you imagine that my daughter?—No, there is a great gulf fixed by religion, and before that obstacle I firmly believe that not the good sense merely, but even the inclinations, the feelings of a young girl brought up a good Catholic as she has been, must pause to reflect. It could not be otherwise.—Still, with all that, and although I have the utmost confidence in her, it is well to remove even the most distant probability.”

“I believe you have spoken wisely,” said Don Angel. “For my part I never suspected that what you fear could occur; I could never conceive that with so grave an obstacle as religion, any feeling of love could arise in the mind of a really pious woman.”

“You forget, my dear Angel, that love is a purely human sentiment.”

“And religion a divine one—true; and yet—”

Don Angel stopped in confusion.

“And nothing that is human is impossible,” added Don Juan. “Consequently let us remove the cause.”

“You are right, we shall lose nothing by that.”

After this short colloquy, Don Juan retired as usual to his study, to distract his brain with reading and writing. In the evening he said to his daughter:

“You know that Señor Morton is leaving us. He has just given me a considerable sum of money for the poor of Ficóbriga. You and your uncle and I will distribute it.”

Gloria could not find words to reply, and Don Juan observing her efforts to appear unmoved, thought he detected a cloud in the calm sky of his daughter's mind.

“What is the matter?” he said in a tone of surprise and suspicion.

“Nothing,” said she. “I was thinking we have not enough poor to share so much money.”

“Oh! we shall find them, we have only to seek. And he has given an equal sum for the poor nuns of * * *. You see money is no more to this man than the sand on the shore is to us.”

“But he is not like the covetous man in the parable.”

“That we cannot know.”

“You believe that he cannot be saved?”

“Ask your uncle that,” said Don Juan laughing, as Don Angel at that moment entered the room. “Do you hear, Angel, the problem my

daughter sets me ; she asks if Morton can be saved. What is his religion ? I do not believe he has any."

"Saved ! saved !" exclaimed the Bishop knitting his brows. "We do not even know exactly what his beliefs are. Saved ! Do you think such a question can be answered in two words. It must depend on the ultimate state of his soul. Who can tell what vicissitudes it may go through even in the moment of death ! But here is Señor Morton coming out, ready to say good-bye to us."

Morton bowed respectfully to kiss the Bishop's ring ; then he gave his hand to Don Juan and to Gloria. He was evidently moved, which did not surprise the two brothers, for they themselves could not be indifferent at parting with their shipwrecked guest. His horse was waiting at the gate ; he had sent off all his luggage two hours previously with Gasparuco.

"Are you likely to be in these parts again at some future time ?" asked Don Juan, once more shaking hands with him.

"Yes, Señor ; I do not think of leaving for England before next month."

"We shall be very glad to see you again," said Don Angel, quite pathetically. "I wish I could see in you anything more than a mere friend—"

“I see in you much more than a mere friend,” interrupted Morton warmly. “I have found you a good counsellor, an admirable shepherd of souls, and a worthy image of the Creator.”

“I have proved but a bad shepherd to you,” said Don Angel sadly. “When I see so precious a soul escape me, I feel that I ought to break my crook and say: ‘Lord my powers are but small and inadequate to extend Thy fold.’”

“Who can mark the boundary line of His fold? Who knows it?” said Morton.

“That is true, very true; and for that reason I hope—I still hope—why should I not speak frankly?” added Don Angel, vexed with himself, “I hope that some day you may become a Catholic.”

“God grant that I may always be a good man,” said Daniel looking down.

He once more took leave of them all, not forgetting Sedeño, and then rode off.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BACK AGAIN.

To the east of Ficóbriga there is a solitary and deserted pine-wood, close to the sea, and exposed to every wind that blows, so that however light the breeze the waving boughs murmur a low song. While in the heart of the plantation the trees grow close together, towards the outskirts they are thinly scattered, leaving narrow avenues between the trunks, and a few independent groups have wandered from the main crowd, up the mountain side or down towards the shore, as if they had quarrelled with their companions. A rough wall runs through the wood, a tumble-down structure in which stones and weeds are mixed up in confusion, and under the fir-trees grow a dozen rare species of delicate flowers which are not known in any garden; blue gems, which smile among the ferns like specks of blue sky shed in some tempest from the vault of heaven and strewed upon the ground. Nature is alone there, attentive to her own needs, rejoicing in the sylvan calm, while the passer-by fancies he hears an echo of

that still music of which the poet speaks and which in such a spot as this whispers: "Disturb me not."

One evening in July the tangle of ferns was trampled down by a horse, and Daniel Morton, who was riding it, dismounted close to the wall. Nor had he to wait, for not two steps off, faithful and punctual as time itself, stood Gloria. All the sweetness and beauty of the calm and tender evening scene were concentrated in her person, or so it seemed in the eyes of her admiring lover, to whom she was the incarnation of the azure sky, the deep sea with its pathetic harmonies, the fragrant and smiling earth, the frittered shade of the grove with its resinous atmosphere; and the light that danced in between the arching boughs, solemn as a cathedral vault.

Gloria looked cautiously round her on all sides.

"There is no one," said Morton.

"I always feel as if some one must see us," said Gloria. "The day before yesterday as I was going home I met Teresita la Monja, Don Juan Amarillo's wife."

An insect fluttering over the flowers, a spider letting itself down by what seemed an imaginary thread, a sail on the horizon, a sunken rock which, as the waves rolled over it, came into sight and vanished again, like a spy raising his head from

time to time—these were the only witnesses of their presence.

“There is no one,” repeated Morton.

“But there will be some one, sooner or later,” said the girl sadly, “and we shall be expelled from here as we were from the house, and there will be no shore, no grove that will receive us. For the half-dozen times that we have come here we have remained concealed; but shall we continue to do so? Every tree even is full of suspicious eyes that watch us, Daniel.”

“We are both innocent of crime, and yet we live like criminals; we have not broken the laws of God, and yet we hide ourselves like incendiaries who have set fire to a palace. Why, why should this be?”

“Nay, I ask you—Why? O God! is it possible that this is Thy doing?”

“It is not His doing,” said Daniel in a melancholy tone. “We are sinning only against the outcome of this advanced condition of society which, having constituted itself the sole arbiter of all truth, maintains the rules of caste as strictly as in the days of the Philistines and the Amalekites.”

“I was thinking last night that what man has done man may undo,” replied Gloria, gazing with ecstasy at Morton’s delicate and regular face which,

with its tender expression, seemed to have come down from some crucifix. "It cannot be so very difficult; let us think of a plan.—But how strange it seems that, however we may intend the contrary, we always drift into talking of something sad."

"Do you not see it is because we talk about religion? and religion, which is beautiful when it is a bond, is horrible and cruel when it divides."

Morton bent down with his face close to Gloria's and looked into her eyes.

"What are you looking at?" she asked, drawing back a little.

"Into the black mirror of your eyes," said Daniel smiling. "I can see the sea and sky in them. It is exquisite to see how the whole landscape repeats itself in that tiny convexity. When you wink your lashes it vanishes and then it reappears."

"Do not talk such nonsense, but think of what I have said to you," said Gloria. "Stay—you have something in your beard."

"Where? where?" asked Morton putting up his hand.

"Nearer your mouth; it is a tiny gnat that has dropped from the pine-tree—not there, close to your mouth—" and Gloria as she spoke gently

released the insect from her lover's beard; but, as a butterfly is caught in a spider's net, Daniel seized her hand and kissed it frantically.

"Gloria—what would you have us talk about?" he exclaimed. "There is nothing we can say that will not be as gloomy as the thoughts of a man condemned to death—"

"Yes—for we too are condemned to death," she said drawing away her hand. "And what is worse, we die innocent."

"Like those condemned to the galleys," said Morton. "We have borne a mark on our foreheads from our cradles. Nothing in the world can remove it."

"Nothing?—it is not so bad as that," said Gloria. "If we ask strength of God he will show us a way of escape."

"But it will need courage, immense courage, my best-beloved."

"Immense courage! Great Heavens!" exclaimed the girl deeply hurt. "Do not magnify the difficulties instead of smoothing them away. If you have courage, believe me I shall."

"Why do you answer me so? My heart's darling, when there is a great fight to be fought, great sacrifices are involved."

"Yes—a great sacrifice must be made, Daniel,

and one of us must make it. Is it to be you or I?"

Morton, sunk in thought, stood looking at the ground.

"Both of us, dear love," he said at last.

"Both of us," repeated Gloria puzzled. "Now I do not understand you. The question is a very simple one; Daniel, do not complicate it. We are two souls—we love each other—but, alas! though we worship the same God we live by different creeds. Here there is a creed too much."

"True, there is a creed too much, and the point is to eliminate it," said Morton gloomily.

"We must pay that tribute to social laws. What do you think about it?"

"That society is terribly stern and hard, hard to propitiate."

"That is to say," exclaimed Gloria indignantly, "that you see no possible solution. I try to open the door and you are determined to shut it."

Morton sighed and looked up at the sky; in truth he saw no door, not even a closed one, turn which way he might.

"Why do you sigh like that? What ails you?" asked Gloria with the impatient uneasiness of an anxious heart.

“Nothing ails me, sweet; I was only thinking of my hapless fate, worse, far worse than yours.”

“Nay, nay—” cried Gloria bursting into tears. “On the contrary, you have convinced me of one thing, one dreadful thing. Daniel, you do not love me as I love you.”

“Gloria—my life, my one love, for God's sake do not kill me with unjust reproach!” exclaimed her lover seizing her hands and covering them with kisses. “If you could know what I am suffering, I who have been on the point of denying everything—name, family, the faith and honor of my forefathers—of becoming a renegade for you; I who at this moment hesitate and tremble, torn between the anguish of never possessing you and that of the sacrifice you demand—how should you know? But I have stated it clearly; one of us must renounce the creed we live in.”

“Yes.”

“And if we were to draw lots it would be mine, is not that what you think?”

“You are a man. The man ought to sacrifice himself for the woman.”

“In this sort of question the victim should be the one whose convictions are the least deeply rooted. What are yours?”

“I believe in God Lord of Heaven and earth,” exclaimed Gloria, laying her hand on her bosom, and raising her eyes to heaven, full of tears and of an eager light. “I believe in Jesus Christ who died on the cross to save mankind; I believe in the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the body, and in everlasting life.—I challenge you to be as explicit as I am. Never have you told me in plain words what your beliefs are.”

“But Gloria, your faith is but lukewarm in many of the dogmas prescribed by the Church—you have confessed as much to me.”

“It is firm and ardent in all that is vital.”

“All is vital—only ask your uncle.”

“I see no need to assert my disagreement with certain things.”

“Then you are not a good Catholic. It is necessary to believe everything, absolutely. You see—”

“What do I see?”

“That I am more religious than you are, because I believe everything, literally everything that my religion teaches me.”

“That is to say,” cried Gloria almost choked with grief, “that I am to make the sacrifice!”

Morton did not answer.

“That is to say,” he at last said, “that we shall die Gloria—that we must die and that God will do

for us in the next world what it is impossible to do in this; for this world my love—my heart's desire—is not for us."

Gloria rose from the stony seat they were sitting on, and with an impulse of inspiration as sublime as that of the martyr who sets forth on the way to the stake, she exclaimed:

"Farewell!"

Morton, seizing her by the fingers of both hands, drew her towards him, and she sank back into her seat.

"The sacrifice will not be of one, but of both at once," said Daniel.

"Jesus Christ who died on the cross," murmured Gloria, "Christ whom I love and worship, has shown me that I can do it, myself alone if it is right; but, though He will give me the strength to sacrifice my life's happiness, He will not give me the strength to drink the cup of a base change of religion that I may marry to the disgust of my family. Oh! merciful God! happy are the lands where religion is a matter of conscience and not of words, where it is not a false law of caste and honor. Here we go about like cattle branded with hot iron. If there must be slavery in everything else, good God, our hearts at least ought to be free!"

And, her fiery protest ended, Gloria rose once more and repeated :

“Farewell—good-bye forever.”

“You have spoken the fatal word,” said Morton bitterly. “The word which, as it seems, is the only possible solution. Good-bye; there is no other formula Gloria, even in such a moment as this. It was burnt into my soul, but I could not, could not say it. It is you who have said it.”

“Because you have snatched from me my very last hope.”

“Yes, for there is no issue from our miserable dead-lock; it is impossible; there is no remedy and it cannot ever be otherwise.”

“So be it, then,” said Gloria in the deepest dejection.

“God requires it of us.”

“We must part forever.”

“To-morrow?”

“No, now, to-day, here,” cried the girl passionately.

“Oh, Gloria, the sacrifice I ask is nothing in comparison with this!” cried Daniel. “Noble and beautiful soul! But if, as you say, we are parting forever, grant me a few minutes longer to see you in. Think of my loneliness, a desolation like that of the sea which is ever thrown back on itself, on

its own infinite vacancy with none even to see it. Gloria, my life, light and sunshine of my eyes, listen to me; do not leave me so. If when you have vanished from my gaze you leave me with the faintest suspicion that I may have offended you I cannot bear it—" Gloria moved away.

"Stay, listen, look!" cried Morton holding her back. "My faith is perfect in the God who made Heaven and earth—who made you. I call Him to witness that I worship you, that my lips have never uttered an assertion that was not true, and that I love you perfectly and that never, so long as I live can any other love take possession of my soul, nor can my memory ever hold any thought so sacred as that of you."

Gloria felt Morton's hands tremble as they held hers, his breath was on her face and she almost felt the fire of his gaze; the poor child writhed and moaned like straw consumed in the flames. Her heart was failing her.

"Gloria," he went on in the tone of one who calls but expects no answer: "Gloria I shall suffer for the rest of my life from a load of remorse if I do not now confess to you that I am a wretch; a wretch, for I ought not to love you and I do, I ought not to have looked at you and I have dared to do so. Your eyes, your grace, your beauty, your sweet-

ness and your goodness enslaved me—forgetting the horrible decree that parts us I dared to remain near you. I know that it was my duty to fly from you, to fly before the evil was past remedy. But I was weak; I saw that you loved me and your spirit held mine in chains. I must have been little less than superhuman not to yield to the temptation. You have seen how I failed; instead of leaving your house in time, I remained in it; then I fancied some special interposition of mercy would remove the obstacles, but time went on, and each day they were more appalling and more immovable. The time came when I must fall to the basest level or pause and recover my balance, and you have set me the example. You were sublime, you have done what I, a miserable wretch, could not do. How miserable am I, to have seen what happiness might be and not to grasp it. You return to your home, to your faith, pure, supreme.—But for God's sake, Gloria do you not see, can you not perceive that my honor towards you was untainted?"

"Yes," was all Gloria could say amid sobs of anguish.

"Have you any shadow of suspicion of the purity of my intentions?"

"No."

"Would you feel me worthy of you if a disastrous fatality of birth did not stand between us?"

"Yes."

"Then now," said her lover, standing up resolutely, "let us part."

"Forever," said Gloria, rising too. She stood pale and dignified in her sorrow, like the angel of death come to bear away a soul. Daniel clasped her in his arms, and she hid her face on his breast, weeping passionately for some minutes.

"Give me a token to remember you by," said Morton.

"A faithful memory needs no token for remembrance."

"True, I shall not need it; but if then, when you are gone, there will be something of you left to me. Give me something if it is only a hair."

Gloria put up her hand to disengage a lock of hair, and smiling in the midst of her sorrow, with that vague sense of humor which sometimes dashes grief, she said: "But I have no scissors."

"That does not matter," said Morton. "I will divide it," and in a moment with his teeth he had cut off the hair.

"It is nearly dark."

"To me it is always dark," murmured Morton.

They separated a few paces but turned to meet

again—like the wave and the strand which seem ever parting, and are always in a close embrace. But at last, as night was falling on the distant hills, a horseman was to be seen riding inland, slowly and with his head sunk on his breast. The sombre figure disturbed the harmony of the smiling landscape which, as soon as he had passed, seemed to recover its brightness.

Gloria walked back to Ficóbriga, bearing the burden of her despair like a disciple of Christ to whom He has said: "Take up thy cross and follow me." Everything around her breathed of peace and rural repose; the oxen wound 'slowly o'er the lea,' from their labor, deliberately, step by step, and slowly nodding their massive heads and noble, solemn faces. The women of the village came out in the opposite direction, carrying on their heads large loaves more than half a yard across, and the fishermen spread their wet nets to dry on the slope up to the Abbey, sparkling with the scales of sardines that had caught in the meshes, as if they were spangled with silver.

Gloria saw it all; and it all was shrouded in the funereal gloom that enveloped her soul.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IT IS ALL OVER.

NEXT morning, very early, the shutters of Gloria's room were thrown open, and day was admitted as soon as it dawned. The girl gazed out wistfully over the town and distant country, and as her eye fell on the trees in the cemetery, she said to herself:

"Ah, little brothers! now I have you alone to love!"

The high-road passed not far from her window, and along it ran the telegraph wires, while the posts stood in a long perspective at equal distances, as if they were marching on with measured strides. On the wires sat a row of birds which settled there every morning, finding this almost invisible perch in mid-air highly convenient, and thence they seemed to look down on the open window, where Gloria had appeared at so early an hour to greet the day and lift up her thoughts to the Creator.

She did not think that the pretty fluttering creatures were the souls of her brothers and of

other children, for she was incapable of such a superstition, but she vaguely associated them with two innocent creatures that had been carried away by Caifás in their little blue coffins; and day after day she would lovingly watch the birds perched on the wires, and miss them when the rain kept them away. This association had no doubt originated in the circumstance that there was above the cemetery a dense clump of trees, which seemed to be the head-quarters of the birds of the neighborhood. Gloria saw them fly out in clouds as evening fell, making a great fuss and noise, till by-and-by they fell asleep, silence reigned among the feathered population, and the cemetery was voiceless again.

But this morning everything she saw was dipped in gloom. If a black light were possible, the sun would have been black to her, and this, which is a contradiction in words, was not one in her ideas, for all creation was darkened by the pall that wrapped her soul. Instead of smiling at the birds which, as usual, were watching her from the wires, a vision floated before her of her two dead brothers, as she had seen them in their blue coffins the day when they were buried, as pale as wax, the flowers in their wreaths as fresh as their cheeks were faded, dressed in little white robes carefully pleated

and tied, and she seemed to see them come dancing towards her with their eyes open, the elder leading the younger by the hand, while, pointing to the earth, they said:

“There alone is peace.”

Then her eyes fell on the church-tower, and she felt a sudden spasm of terror and aversion. The tower was a concrete idea, and her spirit, at once exalted and wearied with grief, recoiled from it as a blind bird might that had inadvertently flown against a wall. Suddenly a voice called up from the garden:

“Gloria, are you not coming down? I will wait for a minute for you to go to church with me.”

It was Don Angel going out to celebrate mass at the Abbey church. Gloria always went with him and enjoyed it; but to-day her heart was cold and she felt a strange, dumb impulse of rebellion. However, she submissively joined the affectionate and kindly prelate, but when she got into the church she was seized with a chill of horror, and the very stones of the building, with their barbarous coat of whitewash, seemed to weigh upon her soul and choke her breath.

When Don Angel came out and went up to the altar, Gloria summoned all her strength of

mind, all her fervor of faith—and not in vain, for Don Angel was in truth a saintly man and impious recalcitrancy was impossible in his presence. The agitated girl struggled resolutely with the agonizing repugnance that surged up in her soul, not strong as yet, but growing every instant like snakes just hatched; as she saw the Host raised in her uncle's venerable hands, a flood of feeling rushed up in her heart, swelling till it seemed to drown her faculties in its torrent, and Gloria broke into tears saying to herself: "Lord—Saviour! I, too, shall be able to suffer and die."

Don Juan de Lantigua, who could observe keenly when he cared to observe, and who for some days had relaxed somewhat in his literary labors, perceived that something was happening to his daughter. He reflected on the matter for a time, and as uncertainty is the twin-sister of suspicion, he could not help coming to certain more or less rash conclusions; without, however, doubting the young girl's virtue, for this, to the honor of both be it said, never entered his head. His suspicions and guesses all took a very different direction, and he consulted his brother on the subject.

"Gloria is not happy," said Don Juan one morning entering his brother's room. "There is something on her mind. I have noticed certain phrases in her speech, and certain reservations, which indicate a painful ferment in her religious views. She has a powerful imagination and her understanding, which is somewhat inclined to break loose from all guidance, is capable of being misled into serious error. Besides I am not without fears as to her excitability of temperament."

At this moment Gloria came in.

"My child," said her father. "In former years you have joined the faithful in receiving the Body of the Lord on St. James' day. It is some time since you have availed yourself of this privilege."

"Not since Easter," said Gloria turning pale, like a criminal conscious of his helplessness before the judge.

"Oh! that is a long, very long time," said his Reverence, kindly reproachful, and letting both his hands fall on the arms of his chair.

"Why not confess then, to-day or to-morrow?" continued Don Juan with affected indifference, "so as to be prepared to communicate on St. James' day. It strikes me that I ought myself to do the same, and I will confess this evening."

“But my father confessor, Padre Poquito, is not in Ficóbriga just now,” said Gloria.

“What does that matter, silly child? You used to confess to your uncle.”

“Yes—when I was a child.”

“And why not now?”

“Come to me my little lamb,” said Don Angel with a loving smile. “You are shy? With all the tremendous sins you must have upon your conscience no wonder—”

“I will leave you,” said Don Juan, as his brother affectionately extended his arm to draw his penitent towards him with a gesture of paternal tenderness. Gloria could not say a word. Her presence of mind had deserted her; she fell on her knees half-fainting with the stress of the moment, and Don Angel put his arm round her neck saying:

“Now let us see my daughter.”

The rest is silence. A soul is being laid bare; and confronted with this solemn rite, the most touching in any religion, the narrator must lay down his pen. No one has the right to intrude on this revelation of a soul to its God.

CHAPTER XXX.

A. SINNER AND A HERETIC.

SHE confessed it all, absolutely all; she searched her conscience to the remotest depths; and as she poured out her confession, she began to breathe more freely, for in truth her burden had been heavy to bear. And the indiscreet listener who should have intruded on her confession, which was a long one, would have heard it broken by sighs and sobs, and the soothing words of the worthy Bishop.

When she ended Don Angel was greatly perturbed. His kindly countenance, which, as an admiring friend once said of it, was a pledge of Paradise in its sweet benevolence, had assumed a kind of irresolute severity, a shade of surprised disappointment—as if some beautiful object had been suddenly eclipsed before his eyes without his being able to interpose, or even to feel annoyed at its disappearance. Don Angel felt as Tobias might when he saw the angel vanish that had so long borne him company. After a short interval

of prayer, which he enjoined Gloria to employ in the same way, he said in very sad tones :

“My daughter I cannot absolve you.”

Gloria bowed in submission.

“For the present, my child,” added he, “you must recover yourself, rest and compose yourself. We will go into the garden for a short time, or take a walk and talk at leisure.” Gloria ran to fetch her uncle’s hat and stick.

“One thing is quite clear,” said the Bishop. “I do not at all approve that your father should remain in ignorance of this matter. I cannot say a word to him without your permission. Unless you authorize me, I am as ignorant of it as if I had never taken your confession.”

“But I wish that he should know it,” said Gloria. “My confession is to you both.”

“Quite right ; that I think quite right.—Are you not suffocated—let us go into the air.”

The two went out, beyond the garden, walking towards Pesqueruela, and the prelate began again :

“I told you I could not give you absolution, and now I will tell you why. It is not your having loved this man that is the cause of my severity in the matter. You are a girl, a woman—and by the natural laws of life at your age a feeling is born in your heart, a liking for some fellow human

creature, which when it is virtuously and wisely directed, may result in much good and conduce to the glory of God. It is true that I detect in the flame which is consuming you an excess of eagerness and passion, and it is of a nature which gives it rather the character of the torment of a wounded soul, sick and borne down with grief, as St. Augustine hath it, than of a sweet human affection. But at the same time your having kept your love a secret is highly reprehensible. These surreptitious meetings are highly unbecoming in a modest and well-educated girl. That which has to be hidden cannot be right and good. Still, this sin, great as it is—so great that I should never have thought you capable of it—” The good man paused, his voice broken by emotion; but controlling himself he went on: “Great as your sin is, it is not unpardonable, particularly if you are honestly prepared, as you say you are, to bury and extinguish this insensate fire, quenching it in a steady and fervent aspiration after the one sovereign love, which is the love of God. And in order that you may see how wide my tolerance can be I will even forgive your having chosen as the object of your passion a man who lives beyond the pale of our holy Church; for in truth your wound ought to close at once, if you cut off your own soul from

all communication with that of a heretic. And, while I fully acknowledge the evident attractions of Daniel Morton's mental qualities, for I esteem him highly, I cannot but wonder that you could find any real and permanent charm of love in a man who lacks the first and chiefest grace—that is, the Catholic faith. However, you have declared your firm resolve to renounce this love with its sinister fever, and that at your tender age is so truly meritorious, that it cannot fail to secure my indulgence. So far all is well, my daughter; but here begins our disagreement, and I shall set it clearly before you.”

Gloria listened with eager attention.

“The real cause of my dissatisfaction is that, as you have confessed to me, certain erroneous ideas totally and utterly contrary to all Christian doctrine and to the dogmas of the Church, have clouded your soul, just as earth-born vapors obscure the brightness of the sun. The mischief is not merely that you have been tainted with these errors—since the enemy, who is always watchful for a weak moment when he may distil the poison of false counsel into the ears of men, might take your soul by surprise and inoculate it with the plague. All men are subject to these attacks of the foe, even the strongest; but then there

comes a healthy reaction, the path is clearly discerned, grace returns with power to the erring soul and evil flies howling, like the devils cast out of one possessed. Now you have not enjoyed this purging of your understanding; you cling to your errors and are in love with them, as you have told me. You keep them stamped upon your heart like the degrading inscription the Jews nailed to the cross, and instead of tearing them out and casting them into the fire, you cherish and cling to them. Is it not so?"

"Yes, Father," said Gloria humbly and respectfully, but with clear determination.

"Well then, you are infected by a disease which is too common in our time, a perilous taint, and all the more so because it gives a specious coloring of generosity to much that is baleful. This is latitudinarianism. You say: 'Men may find the road of everlasting salvation and win celestial glory in any creed they sincerely follow.' But I tell you no; this theory is controverted and condemned by the Supreme Pontiff in his Encyclicals, '*Qui pluribus*' and '*Singulari quadam*.' You say 'every man is free to embrace and profess that form of religion which, guided by the light of his reason, he regards as the true one.'

But this proposition is likewise condemned. What do you say to that?"

His Reverence stopped in his walk and turned face to face with his niece. "I will explain all these subtle points to you calmly and at length," continued the Bishop. "And we will talk it all out, for I cannot sleep in peace while the least trace of this poison remains in your mind. But tell me, my darling child, how could you ever let your understanding harbor these accursed vipers? It was no doubt the man whom you have been so unfortunate as to love, who inculcated these principles of latitudinarianism, which are so sadly prevalent in the world, from the very fact that they seem to be so full of generosity and liberality."

"It was not he," said the penitent with eager emotion, "who gave me these ideas; Daniel, though he never let me clearly see what his religious beliefs are, always seemed very free from what you call latitudinarianism. On the contrary, his beliefs seem very deeply rooted and almost intolerant. Besides, Sir, he was always too delicate to say a word to me that could shake my adherence to the religion of my fathers. We discussed religion as a social bond and nothing else."

"Then it was yourself.—But stop, I am rather

tired, and it would be as well that we should sit down a little while on this stone."

"I and I alone," cried Gloria seating herself by his side, "am guilty of these ideas. For some time since I have known him, I have worried myself with such thoughts, night and day. I could not get them out of my mind and, so far as my comprehension allowed, I have thought them out thoroughly. It seemed to me that my arguments admitted of no answer, and I was proud of them, putting them forward very confidently in my dialogues with myself."

"But you say 'since you have known him;' he is then in sort responsible."

"No, no, my dear uncle, no one is but myself. And, to speak to you with the most perfect frankness, and show you my soul to its inmost depths, even before I ever knew him I had thought of these terrible things, though I had given my thoughts no definite form. In talking with Morton light seemed to flash upon my mind from a thousand sides at once, and by that light I began to see different aspects of religion, of the religious disputes of men, and also of the greatness and the infinite sweetness of the reign of Christ, in whom I saw the Saviour of all nations, of all who are good, of all the pure in heart."

Don Angel frowned.

"I see," he said with some severity, "that your disease is spreading. Oh! when your father knows this! he, who by his orthodox studies and the lucidity with which he has been able to disentangle truth from error, in the abominable strife of these days, has triumphed—"

"But you and my father will certainly be able to convince me," said Gloria with all humility.

"To convince you! and you say it as if it were a task of time? So that you intrench yourself in your error, and shut yourself up inside a wall of obstinacy and disputatiousness which are worse than the errors themselves. Gloria, Gloria my child, for God's sake, consider your own state of mind. You see, I cannot absolve you if you do not give up these opinions, if you do not tear them out of your heart with horror, as you would fling from you some noxious creature that might sting you."

"There can be no greater torment to me," said Gloria, "than the feeling that I am separated from you and from my father by so slight, so small a thing as a thought, an opinion which may change at any hour. Still, if at this moment I were to say to you: 'Uncle, I have torn out the baleful monster, I am freed from error,' I should

“speak only from my lips and not from my heart, for the ideas I have pleaded guilty to will not go out of my head simply because I say ‘go!’ They are so firmly rooted, that I cannot snatch them out. And when I appeal to my faith in Christ, it answers me nothing against them.”

“Gloria, child—for mercy’s sake!”

“And would it not be worse than the error itself, if I were to recant with my lips, while I lacked the inner strength to crush it?”

“Of course. But are you gone mad, child? Have you lost the gifts of Divine Grace and the Holy Spirit?”

“My dear, good uncle, I do not know what I have lost; all I know is that it would be very difficult to convince me that the ideas you disapprove of are anything but true. I do not want to be false, I do not want to be a hypocrite; I have opened my soul to the inmost core that you may see and read it. I can do no more, I cannot do violence to my conscience—”

“So that in short, to you authority counts for nothing! You are going on from heresy to heresy!” exclaimed Don Angel thoroughly horrified.

“Indeed,” said Gloria, “if I am in error, if I am tainted with heresy, I declare solemnly that I do not wish to be; and—that I will do all I can to

purge myself of it; but my dearly beloved uncle and Father, I dare not lie, I dare not affect a submission I do not feel, I dare not subscribe to a belief in certain things which I do not believe; it is not a mere vain caprice which forces me to think as I do, but an overwhelming force, a flame which is as fierce as it is undying."

"So that you are in fact a rebel—a rebel! For the love of God, Gloria, think what you are doing!" cried his Reverence in extreme anguish of mind.

"Uncle, uncle, if I lose your love I feel as if hell were indeed open before me," cried Gloria bursting into tears.

"You will lose it, you will lose that and everything;" said Don Angel with increasing severity. "Things cannot go on like this. You authorize me to speak to your father?"

"I have already told you so."

"Then let us go in," said the prelate rising.

They spoke no more. As they went, Don Angel came to the conclusion that pious exercises combined with a salutary regimen of abnegation and of delicate exhortation, such as might befit the sensitive soul of his niece, a certain course of seclusion and frequent association with holy scenes, might cure the leprosy which had tainted the girl's pure and lofty mind. While she, walking towards

home, absorbed in thought and grief, still heard in her inward ear the fateful voice, which again and again broke in upon her sorrowful meditations, saying :

“Rebel, rebel. Your intelligence is your strength. Rise, assert yourself; purge your eyes of the dust which darkens them, and look at truth face to face.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

A PAUSE.

UNHAPPILY—or happily—this is not the time and place to discuss and decide which—every hour carried Gloria more surely and swiftly on the wings of her latitudinarianism, which was to take her to God-knows-what abyss of horror.

After much meditation, Don Angel determined on not speaking to his brother of Gloria's fatal passion for the stranger. It was already a thing of the past and finally set aside, and now the sooner it was forgotten the better. At the same time he thought it wise to warn him of the errors she had fallen into, since if they were not at once attacked, they would grow and flourish like evil weeds.

It need not be said that Don Juan felt very serious anxiety on hearing of the precipitous and devious paths by which his daughter's mind had risked such a perilous descent; still, recalling the audacious ideas put forward by Gloria many years since, he perceived that the disease was of old standing and had only taken a new form. It embittered life to him at the time, and all he could think of was to devise palliatives and compose moral discourses which might reclaim his adored child, and make her once more the simple catholic believer she had formerly been. He could not, of course, guess what had occurred with regard to Morton; still, at the bottom of his soul he had a vague suspicion. Without conceiving that his daughter had actually loved Morton, he could understand that the man's delightful manner and brilliant accomplishments might have had some influence on Gloria's heterodox affectations, and he now deplored more than ever the disastrous wreck of the Plantagenet.

The two brothers lost no time in laying a complete siege, in the form of advice, admonition, and exhortation. The Bishop tried to lead her back with gentleness, the layman with wrath and severity; but these attacks produced no positive results, or, to speak more accurately, the results were adverse

to the admirable intentions of the two Lantiguas and the glory and triumph of the Church.

On the very day when she had confessed, Gloria went on from one heretical proposition to another, and one devil after another seemed to struggle for possession of her soul; from latitudinarianism she was advancing to rationalism and other pestilential notions.

However, there came a point at which the tender devotion of the three to each other had some effect in shaking her firmness, for the hapless girl's affections rose superior to every consideration. ✓To lose the love of her father and her uncle seemed to her an irreparable misfortune, and she resolved that she would force herself to forget her errors since she could not extirpate them. Next day, when Don Angel was admonishing her in the presence of her father, she ended by exclaiming:

“Oh, my dear, kind Father! Who could resist your authority and goodness? I yield; I am conquered; I will believe all that our Holy Mother Church bids me believe.”

She had yielded; still, at the bottom of her soul would lurk these latitudinarian ideas, which were so utterly condemned by all established authority; lurked and lived on, like some perennial plant which preserves through each winter

the possibilities of a resurrection and summer bloom. Gloria did as nine-tenths of the world do, kept her heterodoxy to herself, in order not to distress the elders. Whence it resulted that, like the majority, she was a true Catholic for the rest of the world and *latitudinarian* for herself.

Don Juan now returned with increased energy to his labors, and the Bishop, though more slowly, recovered his peace of mind, satisfied that he had saved the soul of his niece from a fearful peril. His love for Gloria was in no way diminished by her aberrations; it was only mingled with a certain tender compassion. This admirable man, who desired above all things to solve every difficulty by his own angelic goodness, left them all unsolved; a not uncommon case in the world, though in less illustrious persons. He had hoped to convert a heretic, and his pious attempt had failed of effect. He had hoped too to disabuse the noble mind of his niece of a base error, and his success was but apparent. The worthy prelate's goodness of heart and purpose were patent to all; but, in spite of him, heresy and error held their own, and marched undeviatingly onward to the goal set them by laws that are immutable.

When events combine to tend in a fixed direction, it is vain to try to evade it. And on the occa-

sion in question we shall see that, in spite of the apparent serenity of the atmosphere, the storm is only in abeyance, and not past; the torrent that is frozen over for a time will break forth again and rush on to its appointed end. How strangely events are linked! How mysteriously do minor incidents involve a sequel of more important ones; how surely does Fate spin a thread out of natural consequences and the natural logic of things. The struggle at Ficóbriga was only suspended; the contending forces had paused for breath, to return to the charge with increased vigor, just as a man in a rage pauses in his speech and steadies his arm before delivering his blow. This delusive pause was, so to speak, the moment of suspense between the flash and the thunder-clap—which is only apparent and a result of the different transmission of light and sound, while in reality they are simultaneous.

We have seen the lightning, and inevitably must presently hear the thunder. We are apt to say that events follow their fated course. But shall we call it fatality or logic? How hard to decide! The logic of events then, works itself out, and neither the goodness of the good nor the wickedness of the perverse can give it pause.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE VOTE-HUNTERS.

IT was the eve of St. James' day, and it was not yet nine in the morning, when a great clamor and outcry were to be heard in the house of the Lantiguas. Don Juan rushed out of his study thinking there was a mutiny in the household, but he was reassured when he saw that this commotion was the work of Don Silvestre, who was shouting as loud as he could :

“We are winning the elections! we are winning the elections!” while his coarse and powerful features, like those of a Roman emperor, were radiant with triumph and delight.

With Romero was his friend Rafael del Horro, the victorious candidate, his satisfaction shining in his eyes. Hardly had Don Juan embraced the pair, when they began to relate all the amusing and lucky chances of the contest, which the curé spiced with no end of ingenious allusions and jokes, till they half died of laughing.

“If it were not so costly, immoral and demoralizing,” said del Horro, throwing off his travelling-

cloak, "the parliamentary game is a thing that ought to be kept up."

Presently came Dr. Sedeño, who had been celebrating mass, and then came congratulations and compliments. In a few words Sedeño informed them of all that had appeared in the local prints during the prolonged absence of the two friends, and they in return gave a wonderful account of the votes, and a history of various protests, thrashings, frays, black eyes, etc., that had varied the proceedings.

It was not long before Don Angel made his appearance.

"You have been absent a long time from your flock, wandering shepherd," said he good-humor- edly to the curé.

"The flock is being guarded equally well, Illustrious Señor, whether we are pursuing the wolves or toiling to keep those rascally sheep out of mischief."

"Equally well, no doubt," said the Bishop; "that I do not deny; still we are not hunters, but shepherds. It is all very well for once, however— indeed I know it was necessary, absolutely necessary. In emergencies like these we are shepherds who, whether we like it or not, have to take up the cudgels."

“Ay! or the bludgeon or the knife or whatever happens to be handy; we or they must win,” vociferated Don Silvestre.

“And it is but fair,” said Don Juan looking at his brother, “that we should use the same arms as they use against us. If only our own lives were in question we might die, but the Church is in our hands and we cannot abandon it.”

Thus spoke the lawyer, the layman, in a tone of indisputable authority, while the priest, the apostle, sat silent and accepted his dictum with passive good-humor. One represented the idea, the other its active impersonation, one took the initiative, the other bestowed a blessing.

For some little time, Don Juan's study was the scene of a storm of projects, reports, and invectives, of religious motives mixed up with worldly ambitions; but at last Don Angel and Rafael went into the drawing-room where Gloria received them. The successful young man laid himself out with conspicuous fatuity to lead the conversation up to the interesting subject of his triumph; but Gloria, whose light shone in a supreme atmosphere, was too far above him to be dazzled by the light of a lucifer-match.

As he listened to their conversation, Don Angel's soul was filled with deep regret, knowing, as

he did, two facts which he deemed equally deplorable: first, the scorn the child had conceived for the graces and virtues of 'the soldier of Christ,' and then her reprobate love for an impious foreigner. Still, with due reverence for the purposes of God, he dropped his eyelids in silent prayer, while folding his hands with the fingers interlaced, he twirled his thumbs uneasily.

"It is a dispensation of God," thought he to himself.

Presently Romero also came down to pay his respects to the young lady of the house.

"I have a complaint to address to you, Señor Curé," said Gloria, after she had heard him sing his own praises of his recent exploits.

"And what is that my daughter? A complaint—of me?"

"What made you turn that poor Caifás out of the sacristy? Is it not a pity?"

"Ah! the vagabond, the drunkard! Still, he has nothing to complain of since, from what I hear, he has become a wealthy man—"

"Ah, yes,"—murmured Gloria in some confusion.

"On my return to Ficóbriga, I was informed that Mundideo had paid all his debts and recovered all his property—in short that he is rich."

“My niece and I,” said his Reverence, “have given him some little assistance, but not so much as that. Unless the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes—”

“There has in fact been a miracle wrought,” interrupted the curé, “or else there has been a robbery committed. Oh! he is a very sharp fellow, is this Caifás.”

“Señor Curé how can you!” exclaimed Gloria indignantly.

“Nay, do you doubt my word? Where and how could Caifás get so much money?”

“Supposing some one had given it him.”

“Oh, I daresay—that is what he says. Indeed he unblushingly declares it was given him by Daniel Morton.”

“And it is true.”

“I do not believe it. Don Juan Amarillo, who understands such matters very well, tells me he is very uneasy about it. He counted his money and found that it was exact, nevertheless he could not divest himself of certain suspicions—”

“Yes indeed,” said Don Juan, who had come in. “All Ficóbriga is talking of the wealth of Caifás, and it seems he is repairing the house. Well, so much the better for me.”

“In my opinion,” said the curé, “we ought not

to rest till we have investigated this matter thoroughly. Indeed the judicial authorities have already determined to interfere."

"And why? It is iniquitous!" exclaimed Gloria vehemently. "It ought not to be allowed—we will not allow it."

✓ "Now my daughter is in her element;" said Lantigua, "that is to say, devoting all her energies, with the utmost eagerness, to a perfectly trivial matter which is no concern of hers." ✓

"I am devoting my energies to protect an innocent person against calumny," exclaimed the girl.

"And how do you know that he is innocent? Come. That is what remains to be proved. The best thing you can do is not to interfere but to mind your own business.—And now gentlemen, that being settled, let us go to breakfast. To-day is a high day."

The curé, however, detained them, saying solemnly: "Gentlemen, gentlemen—"

"A speech, shall we have a speech?" asked Don Juan, for the stalwart pastor had raised his right hand, as he spoke, in an attitude little less than Ciceronian.

"Gentlemen, I hope that to-morrow all who are here present, beginning with his Reverence the Lord Bishop of Tresestellas, and including our dis-

tinguished and worthy representative and deputy, Don Rafael del Horro, will do me the honor of accepting a *déjeuner* and favoring me with their presence at a select party at my little country-house at Brijan. I propose to celebrate our victory in a simple manner, with a frugal and unpretending little feast, without any fuss or worldly display, and with no pomp or ceremony, as the primitive Christians may have met at their pious festivals—”

Don Juan saw that the curé was drifting into the sermon style, in a way which was far from pleasing at this hungry hour, so he hastily said :

“We accept, we accept; but just now we have more immediate work in hand. To breakfast my friends.”

In a few minutes they were all seated round Don Juan’s table, which was well furnished, notwithstanding the almanac showed it to be the 24th of July, and so a fast-day.

“Then you accept?” asked Romero.

“Epicures!” said Don Angel. “For my part I will decline Señor Curé, with many thanks.”

“Oh! if your Reverence disapproves of my little festivity,” said Don Romero humbly, “we will give it up at once.”

“No, no, my sons, why should you? Prepare

your banquet which I quite understand is to be frugal and decorous. But I will not assist at it; in the first place, because I do not care for festivities, and in the second, because this one is associated with a political event, and I avoid all political questions."

"I feel deeply hurt that your Reverence will not honor me," said the curé. "Do you suppose we are going to hold an orgy? And the Psalmist says: 'The righteous shall feast,' '*Et justi epulentur.*'"

"And rejoice in the presence of God," added the Bishop promptly. "Do not let us wrest the scriptures, my son, nor maintain that the inspired King recommends gluttony."

"Nay, indeed," said Don Silvestre: "Whatever your Reverence says shall be a law to me."

"Then I say, celebrate your secular festival; but do not invite me because I must refuse. In the evening after you have eaten, I will walk as far as your country-house; it is not a great distance."

"You go down the river a little way, cross the bridge of Judas and Don Juan Amarillo's fields, and there you are at the Copse."

"Yes, I know the way."

At this moment the maid came in with a letter

for Don Juan, who opened it, and after glancing through it, said:

“It is from Daniel Morton. He writes to say he sets sail to-morrow early and takes leave of us all.”

Don Angel cast a glance at his niece. Firm, steady and heroic, Gloria received the blow without betraying the agitation of her suffering heart. Only Don Angel, who was behind the scenes, fancied he could detect a shadow of a cloud on the young girl's face. Don Juan looked at her too. Then the conversation turned on Daniel Morton, but Don Juan Amarillo just then came in; whether he would or no, he was made to take a seat at the table and a mouthful to eat, though somewhat hurriedly, for the justice of the town was waiting for him, to come to some determination in the matter of Mundideo. Don Juan de Lantigua, whose opinion he asked, expressed it, however, as follows:

“I see no reason whatever for interfering with Mundideo, unless it can be proved that he came dishonestly by the money.”

“That is what is to be proved.”

“But have you, for instance, missed anything out of your safe?”

“No, but money certainly does not come up

out of the ground like grass. Caifás must have robbed some one. What we propose is that all the inhabitants of the town should take stock of their money and property, and meanwhile that José Mundideo should be put into prison."

"Still the law—"

"Law or no law—"

"Don Juan," said Romero, addressing Amarillo: "Will you do me the honor of eating with me to-morrow at the copse?"

"Ah, ha! I know already that you have won the election; good for the champion of the Church," cried Amarillo with enthusiasm; then, rising with his glass in his hand, he went on:

"Allow me to propose a toast, gentlemen. To the health of his Reverence, the very illustrious Don Angel de Lantigua, the most noble of the sons of Ficóbriga, the most saintly of the apostles of Spain, the model of virtue from whom we may all take example, a man of eminent piety—"

"For pity's sake!" exclaimed the Bishop putting his hands over his ears and covered with confusion and embarrassment. "Enough flattery, Don Juan, and more than enough. The best compliment you can pay me, and the only one that can please me, is not to interfere with poor Caifás."

All the company then kissed the prelate's ring, and he retired before they took their coffee.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AGAPE.

ON St. James'* day there was always a sort of fair at Ficóbriga, that is to say, a lottery was held in the public field outside the town, and a bull-fight in the market-place; numbers of booths were erected for the sale of fruit and cakes, wine and syrups; one tent formed a theatre; there were national and local dances, and at night a grand display of fireworks. Still, the great event of the day was to be the banquet prepared for his friends by Don Silvestre Romero, who was lavish in all he undertook.

From a very early hour troops of servants had had no rest for hand or foot, and all were superintended by the worthy priest himself, who was an expert in such matters. Provisions were brought out to the Copse in well-loaded country carts, their wheels—never by any chance greased—shrieking

* St. James is the patron saint of Spain, and legends tell of his appearance on various occasions to conduct her armies to victory.

and groaning as they wound up the hill at the top of which Romero's house stood. Something to wonder at was the energy displayed in the enterprise by Señora Saturnina, whom we might dignify with the title of mistress of the house, as she ruled the two or three maids and other underlings in the wealthy priest's household. It may safely be asserted that this estimable woman never closed an eye through the night of the 24th; and indeed she hardly went to bed at all, spending it in beating eggs which fell, crashing by dozens into vast pans, or plucking fowls which were sacrificed in the twilight in cackling hecatombs.

Still, the chief struggle was to take place in the morning, when the kitchen-fire was lighted and the great work was begun, the saucepans began to mutter and the steam of savory messes, after half-filling the house, were wafted out into the high-road, a blessed foretaste of the great cheer that was in preparation. Doña Saturnina and her assistants had not hands enough to hold the pinches of spice and the nutmeg, to squeeze the lemon and hand the cinnamon; while of bubbling stews, larded steaks, well-stirred salads, and delicate puddings, there seemed to be enough to feed a regiment.

At the proper hour two serving-men placed

on the dining-room table a small mountain of bread, and the plate and other utensils were all arranged; enormous baskets arrived filled with heaps of sweets, the handiwork of certain skilful nuns, and out of a burly cask was tapped the rich old vintage of Rioja which, after bubbling in a little whirlpool in a funnel kept for the purpose, danced into the bottle with a sound like a diminuendo on a trumpet. Doña Saturnina forgot nothing, but kept an eye on every operation, so that nothing should be omitted, and herself arranged the branches of flowers that were to decorate the table, the toothpicks, the finger-bowls and the other small accessories of a well-laid entertainment.

It was mid-day when the guests set out from Ficóbriga under a sun which was scorching, even in the fresher air outside the town. In front was the carriage which conveyed Don Juan Lantigua, Rafael and the curé himself. Then in another came Don Juan Amarillo with the curé's deputy and two beneficed priests of the neighborhood, and after them, in a break, the rest of the company, friends who had come from the chief town of the province in honor of so great an occasion. Eleven persons in all. As soon as the guests were seated, Don Silvestre said grace, and the *stridor dentum*

began. Doña Saturnina had hit upon the happy idea of setting the table outside the house in the midst of a leafy orchard, and in the shade of two or three poplars, which only allowed a few of the sun's rays to pierce between their branches and fall here and there, as if the objects on the table had been just sprinkled with light. Here they gilded a peach, there they silvered a glass decanter, here again they shone on a salt-cellar, and there on the polished bald head of Don Juan Amarillo.

So far as the most important part of the entertainment was concerned, namely, the food, any praise that might be lavished on it would be inadequate to the reality—to its abundance and the excellence of every dish, though it was splendid rather than refined; like all these monotonous and over-nutritious Spanish meals which seem made for the stomachs of giants, and better fitted to feed and strengthen the bodies of hard-working rustics than to tickle and please the palate of the epicure. First there was soup thickened with rice, enough in itself to fill the hungriest, and then fowls with tomato, followed by pork, also with tomato sauce; after which came the delicate fish of the coast, served with *sauce piquante* or floating in rich gravy. With these there were scarlet crawfish,

displaying flesh as white as snow between the cracks in their red armor, and then meat again 'ruled the roast,' as represented by joints of mutton, cutlets fried in batter and other rich and savory messes, preceded and followed by olives, gherkins, slices of Dutch and native cheese, anchovies and other appetizing morsels, not omitting infant pumpkins stuffed with forcemeat, in which it was difficult, to decide which to admire most, the delicate flesh of the envelope or the spicy fragrance of the soul within, besides any quantity of gorgeous capsicums, which looked as if the guests were eating red-hot coal. And what shall be said or sung of the wines, some of them of the finest vintages of Andalusia? What of the sweets and creams which might have sufficed to regale all the epicures in Christendom?

Finally, the soothing balm of tobacco floated up in the air, and a pale-blue mist hovered over the table, and veiled the guests in a visible atmosphere.

The Amphitryon of the feast, Don Silvestre, had dined well; Don Juan de Lantigua had hardly done more than taste the dishes, Rafael del Horro eat but little, while Don Juan Amarillo devoured all that was offered him. The rest did their best not to disappoint Don Silvestre, who, as

host, exerted himself to the utmost that all should dine well, and found no consolation in seeing that his guests were less ready to eat than himself, but reproached them for their abstinence and himself offered them the dishes that they might help themselves a second time. ~

One incident deserves mention, as it was a precise imitation of a detail which recurs at almost every political banquet in Madrid. Rafael del Horro proposed that the bouquet, which graced the centre of the table, should be sent to the Señorita Gloria de Lantigua.

While they were all smoking, it struck Don Silvestre that he ought to make a speech, and the worst of it was, that he did so.

“My dear brethren and friends,” he began, “we have met to celebrate a triumph; for it is a triumph, and a great one, an immense one, which will lead us on to a still greater victory, to the victory of Truth over Error, of Virtue over Vice, of God over Satan.”

“Very well said!” said Don Juan Amarillo, opening his little eyes which he had gently closed soon after drinking his last glass of wine.

“We have fought like good soldiers,” added Romero, who loved to use military metaphors even in his sermons, “and we will not cease to

fight. In the sacred scriptures it is written: 'And thou, Jehovah, art the God of hosts, and hast no mercy on those who rebel with iniquity; pursue them with fury, pursue them till they shall know that God doth rule in Jacob, even to the ends of the earth.' Thus, it is our duty to fight when things have gone so far as to require us to have recourse to arms. Ah! gentlemen, if only I had the eloquence and the erudition of my illustrious friend, that eminent Catholic, Don Juan de Lantigua, I might tell you to what extremes, the impious daring of the Revolutionaries has gone, and the painful predicament in which they seek to place all religious and pious men. If, I repeat, I only had—" Here Don Silvestre paused and coughed slightly. All were listening to him with the utmost gravity, excepting that a faint smile trembled on Lantigua's lips, which seemed to say:

"You had far better hold your tongue, you clumsy bungler."

"However—in short—I have not," said the stalwart priest. "I have neither his dazzling eloquence nor his amazing erudition. So I beg leave to yield the privilege of addressing you to him—"

"Oh! if only Don Juan would do us the favor of speaking!" exclaimed Amarillo, pulling himself together in the midst of a nod.

Lantigua laid his hand on his chest and coughed.

“Gentlemen, I really cannot,” he said with modesty. “Rafael, do you speak, you will do it far better than I.”

Del Horro made many protests and excuses, but at last, unable to resist the pressure of all the guests, who unanimously urged him to speak, he rose, wiped his spectacles, put them on, and raising his brows, spoke as follows :

“Gentlemen, no one can be less fitted than I, to take the lead in addressing you. I am young and inexperienced, far from learned, and in no position of authority. I can only ask your favor for such qualities as I possess ; my sincere faith, my perfect devotion to the Catholic Church, the efforts I have made, in my own narrow sphere, to achieve a practical triumph for the Church—that loving Mother, by whom we live, and move, and have our being. It has been God’s good pleasure that the most unworthy of His soldiers, the most insignificant of His servants, should this day achieve a solid triumph in the contest against the unrighteous. He it was that gave me strength to defend His cause ; He gave power to my words, valor to my heart, vigor to my mind. ‘Ye shall be strong in battle.’

“ A deep, loathsome and spreading leprosy is eating into the body of society ; it is the Modern Spirit—a dragon with a hundred heads, each more hideous than the other, eager to tear down the standard of the Cross. Shall we suffer it ? By no means. What can a few hundred of depraved rebels do, against the vast majority of a Catholic country. For we are not superior in attitude only, but in numbers. Let us raise our glorious standard in this crusade, and cry : ‘ Get ye behind us, oh, iniquitous and perverse followers of Satan, for the gates of hell cannot prevail against the Kingdom of Christ ! ’ And then, as I turn my face humbly towards the East, I descry a beautiful and reverend form. At the sight of him my heart fills with fervent joy, though the tears rise to my eyes, as I reflect on the pitiful state to which the evil-minded have reduced the torch which used to be the light and glory of the world. Filled with admiration and respect I hail him : ‘ Great art thou, O Peter ! and not merely for thy goodness, but for thy martyrdom. Of thee too it might be said, in these days, that thy raiment is rent, and for it they have cast lots. Alas ! and how many, after despoiling thee, have cast thee into chains. The fiends in hell shall devour them. Meanwhile, O holy Father Peter ! I hail thee, though with tears ;

I sing a loving Hosanna before thee, and implore thee to double my strength and to inflame my zeal, that I may not be dismayed, in the great struggle that is impending.' ”

As the valorous young man ended, he was enthusiastically embraced by the guests near him, and Don Juan de Lantigua, without rising from his seat, began to speak as follows, amid the greatest attention and the profoundest silence :

“ My dear friends and brethren, I will be so bold as to represent to you that in this struggle to which we are called by the impiety, malicious spitefulness of the revolutionary leaders, it is not enough that our weapons should be keen and well-tempered, or that stalwart arms should be bared for the fight. The best weapon is prayer and the most redoubtable bulwarks are virtue and a noble example. I feel prompted to declare what I have seen and deplore, that the religious mind is much enfeebled among ourselves. I hear much talk of fighting, but little of the love of God. ‘ Many of you shall slumber ’—but we must all wake for the storm is upon us; we must rouse in the spirit as well as in the flesh. Do you not perceive that heresy is spreading everywhere among us? Do you not see even the strongest yielding to it? Do you not recognize the fact that rationalism and

atheism have snatched many souls from the arms of the Church. That every day diminishes the number of earnest Catholics, and augments that of the indifferent or disbelieving? Here we have an evil far too great to be easily remedied. I tell you plainly, you must not only fight, but you must preach. The hour that has struck is not merely that of combat; we must set the good example of self-denial, patience, nay, of martyrdom. These are three words of magical might which will always be of greater efficacy than bare steel."

"Very good, hear, hear! Bravo Señor de Lantigua!" cried Amarillo, unable to contain himself.

"I detest applause and outcry and the deification of a speaker," continued Lantigua. "Honor is God's alone, we ought only to glory in Him who, as David hath it, 'was before the mountains were brought forth and from generation to generation.' However, to continue my remarks, I will say that the universal taint of which I have spoken, this plague-spot, this poison has been introduced among us by contact with foreigners. From the remotest ages Spain has enjoyed the inestimable advantage of possessing the only true faith, without any admixture of other creeds or the debilitating effects of dissent. But time and the evil

nature of man have given rise to a civil power which, to meet the views of malignant foreigners, has left the Church unprotected when its duty, as Saint Felix has taught us, is to leave the Catholic Church in possession of her rights, and allow nothing to interfere with her liberties.

“Now, what happens? Error has struck deep root into our soil. Beware, all good Catholics! according to the enemies of God the precious unity of our faith is in itself an evil, and to remedy that evil they require us to open the door to an idolatrous worship, to the heresies of the Reformed Church, to the aberrations of rationalism—which are as wild as the thoughts of a drunken man. See only whither these baleful ideas are tending, overflowing like gutters of filth when the floodgates of heaven are opened, and the waters tear down their banks, and all the soil of the earth sweeps down, strewing putrefying matter among the bodies of drowned wretches.

“Shall Spain cease to be Spain? No, a thousand times no; we must clear her sacred soil of this pestilential mass, and then in her sky we shall see again the glorious sun of the Catholic faith. If we do not fight for this great end we had better not fight at all.”

He said no more for he was tired, and indeed

he had said enough. Each of his words was gold, as Don Juan Amarillo expressed it, and the compliments and congratulations were vociferous. The greatest enthusiasm prevailed, and almost—almost was Romero's assistant curé about to take up the parable, but Rafael happening to glance down the road saw his Reverence Don Angel approaching.

“Here,” said he, “is one that cometh in the name of the Lord,” and the company, accepting his mystical announcement, rose to receive the Bishop.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AT THE BRIDGE OF JUDAS.

WHILE a dozen of laymen were thus occupied in regulating the affairs of the Church, in the strength of a good meal, Don Angel de Lantigua, leaving his niece in the church, where she was engaged in religious exercises, was walking along the high-road, towards the bridge of Judas, with the purpose of joining his friends at the Copse. On one side of him walked his secretary, and on the other his page, and he was closely followed by a number of the halt, maimed, and beggars of the

district, panting after him till he had given them his blessing, which some of them valued more than the alms that accompanied it. The saintly man, with his spirit as calmly happy as was its wont, was proceeding contentedly with his two followers when, just as they were about to cross the bridge—a wooden structure, both old and fragile—he observed that it trembled beneath his feet, nor was he long in detecting the reason; a horseman had come on to the farther end and he was galloping.

“Hey, gently there,” cried the bridge-keeper. “You see you are desired to walk your horse.”

The rider was Daniel Morton, who, as soon as he saw the Bishop, observing too how narrow the bridge was—no wider than that by which the Mohammedan enters Paradise—backed off and dismounted.

“What you, Señor Morton?” exclaimed Don Angel, feeling that all his good spirits had suddenly vanished. Daniel kissed his ring with profound respect and, taking off his hat, he said:

“Your Reverence did not expect to see me again in Ficóbriga?”

“No, I certainly did not, since my brother had a note from you in which you announced your departure.”

“But it was not God’s will that I should set out to-day.”

“Be careful; it is not fitting to ascribe the blame of everything that happens to God,” said the prelate gravely. “God may have permitted this, but not have willed it.”

“I ask your pardon,” said Morton. “But I believe He willed it. I was on the quay at X. with all my luggage, and only waiting for the boat that was to convey me to the steamer out at sea, when I felt a heavy hand on my shoulder, and turning round I saw Caifás, Don Angel, with the most stricken face I ever beheld.”

“Yes, I see—I understand.”

“Caifás fell on his knees before me and said: ‘Señor, in Ficóbriga they say I have committed a robbery, and that the money I have got is not mine. I am threatened by the Justice, and every one is clamoring that Caifás the ugly, the villain, the idiot, shall be put in prison. I broke my word, for I have told them it was you who saved me from misery; but no one will believe a poor wretch like me, and Don Juan Amarillo cries shame on me more than any one—’ In short, Reverend Señor, I had to postpone my voyage to get the man out of so bad a scrape; since, if I had not done so, the very charity I had bestowed, and which in

truth was a mere nothing, would have turned against him, and have served only to plunge him into deeper misery."

"A good thought and a good action," said the Bishop impressively. "So good that I will permit you to cross this bridge, which otherwise I must have barred to you. Proceed—but do not linger in Ficóbriga." He took leave of him affably but a little dryly; Morton pursued his road to Ficóbriga, while Don Angel took that to Brijan; still, at every ten yards he turned his head to see which way the stranger was going. But he saw him turn towards Cortiguera where Caifás lived, and this relieved the anxiety which had begun to agitate his mind.

When the Bishop had nearly reached the Copse, all the servants, great and small, and all the curé's dependants, with Doña Saturnina, like a drum-major at their head, sallied forth to meet him and kiss his ring, whence resulted no small confusion. At the same time he was hailed with shouts of "long live the pride of Ficóbriga." Nor did their importunate homage cease, till he had fairly crossed the threshold of the curé's domain.

"And here are the remains of the banquet?"

said Don Angel, as his eye fell on the disordered table. "Well, it was a good idea to dine in the open air for the heat is suffocating."

"And it strikes me, gentlemen, that the evening will not pass without rain," said Don Silvestre scanning the horizon. "Will your Reverence take some chocolate?" This entertainment was served at the moment, and Don Angel seated himself on a rustic bench. The rest of the party collected round him, with the exception of Sedeño and Rafael del Horro, who went aside to study a sheet of a newspaper.

"Did you say, Don Silvestre, that it would rain this evening?" said the Bishop, helping himself to chocolate.

"I fear it will; the heat is melting. We shall have a gale, and a heavy one; the weather looked exactly like this the day the Plantagenet was lost—and what a day that was."

"Tremendous!" said his Reverence. "And who do you think I met this very day crossing the bridge? You do not guess? Well, Daniel Morton himself."

"Was he going to Ficóbriga?" asked Don Juan with great interest.

"He was.—It seems it was he who gave the money to Caifás."

“The man who does not trust you, buys you,” said the money-lender with a wink. “I do not believe in such splendid charity unless it begins at home; besides this foreigner had need have plenty of money—”

“Still he might very well have done a charity—”

“Charity is the very thing I never believe in—nor a disinterested action of any kind. We are not such simpletons here, Señor Morton! We Spaniards have left off sucking our thumbs, and know a rascal when we see him.”

“My friend Don Juan,” said the Bishop, stirring his chocolate, “we are bid not to judge, that we be not judged;” then, changing his tone and the subject, he went on: “What a pretty place this is of Don Silvestre’s. Everything is thriving, and the labor and care bestowed on it turn to fruits of blessing. Would to God it were the same throughout our beloved country, and that every good seed sown, by wise counsel and exhortation, might bring forth a harvest of good works. See, what apples! what pears! what peaches!”

Don Silvestre was enjoying one of the chief joys of his life, easy as it was, that of showing off his little estate. The Bishop had risen, and Romero leading the way, pointed out to his Rev-

erence the choicest varieties of pears, growing on long lines of espaliers and supported by stout rods all covered with flourishing greenery and loaded with fruit. There were bergamots, duchesses, beurrés, winter-pears, and a dozen other foreign varieties, and the curé invited the prelate's attention to each crowded branch:

"Only look at this—Do you see that? There are no such pears in all the country round."

Meanwhile Don Juan Amarillo had beckoned Lantigua aside, for the discussion of an important piece of business.

"But we must not go very far," said Lantigua, "for it will rain before long."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE DEEP.

MORTON stopped at Cortiguera and Sildo said:

"Father will be home directly. He is gone to the Abbey to say his prayers."

In fact Caifás shortly appeared.

"Here I am," said Morton. "Take me wherever you want me; only make haste, for I must be back at X. by nightfall. Where is this judge

who cannot believe it possible that a man can get money without stealing it?"

"If your worship would not mind coming with me to the house of the notary, Don Gil Barrabás, brother of Don Bartolomé, and giving me a written testimonial to say that your worship did give me the eighteen thousand reales*—"

"Go on and show me the way to his house."

"Oh, Señor! what return can I ever make for all your goodness?"

"Sildo can hold my horse and take care of him till we return. We shall not be long gone."

Half an hour later Morton and Mupidéo were back again at Cortiguera, but in vain did they look round for Sildo and the horse; both had vanished. Sildo, as he stood holding the bridle of the noble beast, had been seized with a sudden and irresistible taste for horsemanship—that is to say, a fancy to mount the steed. He was but twelve years old and had never yet tasted the coveted delight.

"If I get on the horse," thought he, "and just go a dozen yards, as far as the *Five Commandments*, how delighted the little ones will be."

His tickled vanity of course had its way—the serpent spoke audibly to his heart, and Sildo could

* The real is $2\frac{1}{2}$ d English; 18,000 = £187.10, or about \$937.

hear it say: "Jump on to the horse, come what may, and you will ride it every bit as well as Señor Morton, and look as fine and as handsome as he."

But—*facilis descensus!* Sildo went on from the *Five Commandments* to the slope of Rebenque; from Rebenque he crossed the field of Pesqueruela, and then a little farther, and still a little farther.

At last, when he wanted to pull the horse up, he found he could not; on the contrary, it broke into a brisk canter.

Celinina and Paco explained that Sildo had gone towards Pesqueruela, and Morton and Caifás set out in that direction in all haste, but nothing could they see; they went down by the pine wood to the shore, but the young equestrian was nowhere to be seen, and the information they gained from those they met on the road was contradictory. Daniel was almost desperate at this provoking hindrance, and all the more so as they saw increasing signs of threatening weather. Caifás commended himself to all the saints, gabbling out *paternosters* and invocations to St. Anthony of Padua.* At last they decided to separate and follow different roads, to meet again at Cortiguera, and they parted in the pine wood.

* The Saint most to be relied on when in search of anything lost.

Morton, tired of the search, presently gave it up and decided to walk back to X.; in order to avoid passing through Ficóbriga, he made a circuit which took him behind the Abbey. Just as he reached the narrow passage, which runs past the eastern porch, he heard the rusty hinges of the door groan, and looking round, his eyes beheld Gloria de Lantigua. Morton could not have been more startled and agitated, if a vision from Heaven had dawned upon him. His first instinct was to fly to her, but he controlled the impulse, and shrinking into a niche in the old Abbey wall, he stood as still as if he had been part of it. Gloria turned homewards, and passed him like some bright flash of thought across the darkness of his despair. He saw her disappear round the corner of the lane and mechanically came out of his nook to follow her.

“I am condemned never to see her again,” thought he. “Then this once at least—” But he kept at some distance, stopping when he had gained upon her, but hurrying after her when she had got far ahead; and at last, when Gloria entered the garden-gate, he stopped short.

“It is all over—” he said. “Now I will go.” And yet, before he could make up his mind to start, he sat for half an hour on a stone in the side

street, which led from the little Abbey plaza down to the grass slope that led to the shore.

A large tepid drop of water falling on his hand, roused him from his dream and, looking up at the sky, he saw a dense yellow cloud with shadows of the gloomiest grey, and felt that the atmosphere was chokingly oppressive. Then a gust of wind rushed down upon him, sweeping whirling pillars of dust before it, and great drops began to fall which splashed up the dust, making black pits in it, as if it were raining penny-pieces. Daniel, seeking shelter from the storm, which was now upon him, went out of that alley into another, and at last found a large empty shed where he was perfectly sheltered. By this time the rain was falling in a deluge that was positively terrifying, inundating the streets and seeming very capable of washing the miserable little town bodily away.

“This is just how it rained on the wretched Plantagenet the day it was wrecked. It seems to be a fate that pursues me; I came in a tempest, and I am leaving in a tempest. The way of the Lord is past finding out.” And then looking up at the clouds, which were rent by the lightning and pouring out rivers, he said softly to himself: “The waters saw Thee, O God, the waters saw Thee and were afraid, the depths also were troubled, the

clouds poured out water, the air thundered and Thine arrows went abroad: The voice of Thy thunder was heard round about. * * * Thy way is in the sea, and Thy paths in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known."

It was now quite dark, for the storm had anticipated the night, the day was already declining. Morton looked up at the west front of the Lantiguas' house, which was on the opposite side of the street, and saw lights in the upper windows.

"They are all in there," thought he, "by this time, and Gloria is soothing the hours of the two old men with songs that are like angels' songs—O God! how happy are they!"

Time went on, the streets were now rivers; cataracts poured from the roofs as if the floodgates of a reservoir had burst above them; the rain lashed the walls as with a thousand whips, the few passers-by hurried along in dismay. At last, after about half an hour of this deluge, the skies seemed to have emptied themselves; the torrent thinned out, the clouds passed over and Nature seemed ready to smile again, with a revulsion as prompt as her rage had been, as though she had been indulging in a mere practical joke.

"It seems to me I can get on now," thought Morton, "but how am I to navigate these streets?"

It would seem that I am to suffer shipwreck not once, but twice, in Ficóbriga."

As these thoughts passed through his mind he heard voices and shouts in the little plaza and also inside Lantigua's garden. A number of persons hurried to the spot, and Daniel also went forward, slowly, at first, but as quickly as possible when he distinguished Gloria's voice amid the cries of alarm.

"What has happened?" he asked the first man he met.

"The sudden flood has broken down the bridge, and Señorita Gloria is dreadfully alarmed, for Don Juan and his Reverence the Bishop had not returned from Brijan."

Morton found the garden open and went in; the first thing he saw was Gloria rushing across the garden. She was wrapped in a red cloak, and on her head and face sparkled a few drops of the rain which had not yet quite ceased. She was tremulous with the chill and with alarm, and her pretty face was very pale.

"Daniel!" she exclaimed in surprise. "You here! what do you want?" And she fled back to the house.

Morton followed her.

"Good God!" she exclaimed. "Do you not

know what is happening? The rain has carried away the bridge; my father and my uncle must have started from the Copse—oh! I cannot live in this suspense—I must go there at once.”

“But you cannot cross,” said one.

“Yes, you can just get across,” said another. “Francisquin has this moment come from the curé’s house. There is a gap in the middle, but by clinging and jumping he could get across.”

“Is Francisquin here, did you say?” asked Gloria.

“Yes, Señorita, he is here with a message from the master.”

“Francisquin, here, come here!” Gloria shouted across the garden. A lean, dark boy came forward, drenched from head to foot like a water-god.

“And my father, my uncle?” asked the girl.

“Nothing has happened to them;” said the boy, “but no one can cross in a coach, and only with great danger on foot. The river has risen tremendously.”

“Did they give you no message for me?”

“Yes, Señorita; that you are not to be uneasy, as all the gentlemen will stay at the Copse to-night, but will return to-morrow; they will have to go up to Villamojada to cross the bridge at

San Mateo, though I think they would do better to cross in boats."

"Thank God! I am easy now," said Glória.

At the same moment she fixed her eyes on Daniel Morton; her terrors being relieved, her mind was wholly absorbed in gazing at this ominous apparition.

"Good-bye," said the foreigner, "since I can be of no use here—"

Gloria hesitated for a moment, agitated and confused.

"Good-bye," she repeated. "I thought you were already on your way to England. Has the ship again been wrecked? Good Heavens! you always come with a storm. Why have you come again? Why did you come before?—For God's sake, Daniel, what does it all mean?"

Her eager face betrayed anxious curiosity and the love which mastered her and which had not been wholly beaten out.

"Will you not show me so much favor as to give me your hand?"

The servants, one after another, had left them.

"But I want to know," said Gloria, "why you are here and not on your way to England. I never thought of seeing you again. Why have you

come back?—But no, I do not want to know—I want to know nothing.”

“It was the direct will of God that I should see you this night. Give me your hand.”

“Take it—and farewell.” Morton kissed it with devotion. “Farewell, in earnest.”

“In earnest,” said Daniel.

“Where is your horse?” asked Gloria.

“I have lost it.”

“Lost it! but then—”

“I am going on foot.”

“Where to, if there is no bridge?” Morton reflected seriously—strange! that the bridge should just now be broken down.

“It is a long way round,” added the girl, probing her friend’s very soul, as it seemed, with her gaze.

“I will go to the inn here, in Ficóbriga.”

“To be sure. Good night.”

Still Morton stood rooted to the ground.

“Good night,” he repeated in a tone of anguish. “But are you going already? Oh! this is horrible, and wicked!” Gloria herself could not move from the spot.

“Yes, I am going; I must—” she said sadly. “This unexpected meeting is a trick of the devil. My friend, go. Good-bye.”

“You turn me out? Oh! this is too horrible. But I will not obey, I call God to witness—” and Morton took a step towards the house.

“I turn you from the house, only because I must, because God demands the sacrifice,” cried Gloria, vainly endeavoring to choke down the torrent of her passion.

“It is false! it is false!” cried Morton in a fever of excitement. “You do not love me, you have mocked at me, at me a miserable stranger flung here by the waves, and who cannot escape though he desires to fly.”

“You are not reasonable and kind, as you were last time we met. My friend, if you care for me and respect me, go. I implore you.”

The poor child was almost choked with the words.

“And never see you again!—If I fly, God will drag me back to you. Never see you again! I will tear my eyes out before I obey you.”

“You can see me better in your memory than with your eyes. It was you who advised that we should each make some sacrifice. Why do you now oppose it?”

“Because God himself has led me to you, and said to me: ‘Go and take that which is thine to all eternity.’”

“Who is your God?”

“The same as yours. There is but one God.”

Gloria felt her passion seething in her soul; it was becoming uncontrollable.

“Morton, my friend,” she said wildly, “I implore and beseech you to go. Go at once, if you care to remain enshrined in my heart.”

“I do not care, I cannot care!” he exclaimed with such vehemence that she quailed.

A fearful turmoil confused her senses and clouded her discernment, as the rising of noxious vapors clouds the sun.

“My friend,” she said once more in desperation that was almost a delirium, “if you care for my love—and I love you more than my life—go, leave me in peace. Will you believe what I say? I love you more than ever, most of all when we are parted.”

“It is false!” he said, “false, false!”

“You are mean!” cried the girl, with a desperate appeal to his better mind. “This is unworthy of you, Daniel; you are not what I thought you.”

“I am—as I am,” muttered Morton. “I can be nothing else.”

“I shall hate you.”

“Then hate me. Oh, I would rather you should, a thousand times rather!”

“All ties and bonds between us are broken,” said Gloria in an agonized tone. “Leave me—Ah! why do you not leave me?”

“I did leave you—but fate, or God, or I know not what, brought me again to your side.”

“God?” she exclaimed. “God?”

“I cannot believe in chance.”

“But I believe in Satan!” she cried.

A furious blast suddenly swept down upon them; they could hardly hear each other speak.

“Gloria,” said Morton with the solemnity of passion, “in the name of God, who is our creator, I appeal to you—darling of my heart, love of my life—come, fly with me; come, follow me.”

“Merciful Saviour!” cried the girl in helpless terror.

“You do not hear the mysterious call of destiny—of God; I do; the sky, the earth, all, everything says to me: ‘She is for you.’”

“Oh! go, good-bye, farewell!” exclaimed Gloria clasping her hands over her ears, and tearing herself away, she rushed into the house; but Daniel followed her. She was in, and tried to shut the door, but Morton opposed it, with all his strength, and entered behind her.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WHAT DREADFUL WEATHER.

"WHAT dreadful weather!" muttered Francisca. "It seems as though the end of the world were come! Mercy! the wind has blown out the light on the stairs—and how the doors are slamming! Roque, Roque."

At the worthy house-keeper's call, Roque made his appearance, half asleep, and met her as she came along the low passage.

"Come man, bestir yourself," said Francisca feeling her way along the corridor. "Holy Saviour! Blessed Virgin and Joseph! how frightened I am! I thought I saw a figure, a shape, a dark object flying up the back-stairs."

"Ah! you see visions, dame Francisca."

"It is bad enough to see you, you ugly lout. Lock the garden door, as the gentlemen are not coming home. What a fearful gale. After the storm, the hurricane; this is the way St. James treats us. It is just as if the demons were let loose, and wanted to lift the house up bodily into the air. Tell me, stupid-head, have you seen the Señorita go up-stairs?"

“ Yes, some time since.”

“ How could you have seen her then, when you were fast asleep? Can she be in the dining-room? No it is all dark. Go and lock the door and light the lantern, and we will search the house.”

“ Search it?”

“ Yes, man; I am not easy in my mind. I fancied I saw!—Holy Saint Anthony preserve us—”

“ A ghost, a spirit?”

“ There, that will do; lock the door, come up-stairs, and hold your tongue,” and they went up-stairs together.

“ Ah!” said Francisca as they reached the top passage.

“ Señorita Gloria is shut up in her room. I see the light through her door,” and going up to it she called out:

“ Good-night, Señorita.”

Then they went over the whole house, but they found no one. The wind did not cease; it stormed the house, on all sides as if to fling it to the ground, and to tear it from its strong foundations and whirl it away in fragments. It seemed as though all Ficóbriga, with the Abbey and the tower, might be swept away by the tornado, like a boat that has lost its rudder. The trees in the garden leaned

from the gale, their branches waving like wild dishevelled hair, and the squalls of rain rattled like hoofs upon the windows. When the mad fury of the gale abated, the sound was like that of violent weeping, mingled with bitter sighs and piercing groans, which rose and fell, and echoed through the house—a monologue of grief, with imprecations, sobs and tears.

Then the blast rose again as furious as ever; the boughs, in their giddy writhing, lashed each other, and amid the turmoil of noises that filled the vault of heaven, it was not difficult to fancy that one heard the beating of the crushed wings of an angel expelled from Paradise.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A LULL AT LAST.

GLORIA felt as if her body and soul both had been frozen to numbness, and she only very slowly recovered her ordinary frame of mind. When she first dared to cast a glance into her conscience, she was horrified at herself. All was dark and hideous there, and when she remembered

her family, her name, her honor—she felt abandoned alike by God and man.

“Daniel, Daniel!” she cried, covering her eyes with one hand and stretching out the other, as though she saw an abyss before her and was craving help. “Where are you?” Morton clasped her in his arms.

“Here,” he said. “At your side, and I will never leave you.”

“How madly you talk!—you must go—you ought to fly, but ah! for God’s sake do not leave me now. I am dying.”

“Now!” said Daniel resolutely. “Never; nothing shall tear me from you.”

“My father!” she murmured.

“I do not care for him.”

“My religion!”

Her lover was silent, and his head sank on his breast.

“Daniel!” cried the girl, in tones of anguish. “What is the matter?”

He did not answer, and laying her hand under his beard, she gently forced him to raise his head.

“You have said the fatal word. I can never accept that,” said he. “You have frozen the blood in my veins, and wrung my heart as if you had lashed it with a whip.”

“Why are you so agitated?” said the girl, herself terrified at his terrors. “Daniel, friend of my soul, do not widen the gulf that parts us; on the contrary, let us try to fill it up.”

“But how?—”

“Let us make an effort, let us amalgamate our beliefs in one creed, and bring our consciences to meet half-way. Have we not sinned together? Then let us be one in something good—in truth. Let us honestly examine what it is that divides us, and we shall find that it cannot be such an insuperable distance.”

“In the eyes of Heaven and earth, no—but in the eyes of men—immense.”

“O God!” cried Gloria, bursting into tears: “Hast Thou no mercy in store for us?”

“My love, my darling,” cried Morton, kissing her passionately. “The moment has in truth come when all must be clear between us.”

“And when we must boldly face this hideous question.”

“Yes—it is inevitable.”

“Remorse stands before us and threatens us with its terrors, still it cries out to us: ‘Ye are one now and forever!’”

“Forever!” he murmured.

“We can never part now.”

“Never!—and the hour for truth has struck.”

“Ah! Daniel!” cried Gloria with a sudden and fervid surging up of religious emotion. “Love of my life, companion of my soul, husband of my choice, let us kneel together, before that image of our crucified Redeemer, and make a solemn vow this night to agree upon our religious differences, making every possible concession, I as much as you. We are both the children of the Saviour Christ, let us fix our eyes on Him—Daniel, Daniel, why do you turn away?”

Gloria had fallen on her knees in front of the crucifix, and clung to Morton's arm that he might do the same; but he only stood upright, with his head sunk upon his breast. Never had his face seemed to her so beautiful or so pathetic. Pale and grave, his blue eyes looked down with a gaze of infinite sadness, and seen in profile, the line of his features, his smooth brow and soft-pointed beard, made his resemblance to the image of the incarnate Son quite perfect.

“Why do you not even look at me?” asked Gloria in despair.

“I can do no more—” cried Morton with a sudden flash of resolve. “Gloria, I am not a Christian.”

“What?—Daniel. O Mary, Virgin Mother!”

“I must at last tell you all,” said her lover with

✓ the deepest emotion. "I am not a Christian; I am a Jew."

"Holy Saviour!—Father, Redeemer!" The words broke from Gloria in a cry of horror and anguish, like the dying breath of a man who falls stabbed through and again, or who sees a gulf yawn at his feet revealing the flames of hell. Her voice died on her lips, and she sank senseless on the floor.

Morton fell on one knee by her side, raised her in his arms, and called her by a thousand tender names; nor was it long before she opened her eyes; but, seeing close to her own face the delicate, but now unmistakably characteristic features, that had contributed to captivate her heart, she pushed him resolutely away, exclaiming:

✓ "Traitor!—Judas! you have deceived me."

"I concealed my religion," said Morton gloomily. "That was all my crime."

"And why did you conceal your religion?" cried Gloria, starting up with vehement indignation, her black eyes flashing fire.

"Out of selfishness; for fear I might fail to win your love," said Morton in a tone that was almost timid in its humility; "I told no lie, I only evaded the truth—still, I confess it was a sin—a great sin, not to speak."

“Base, infamous!—But no, it is not true.—You cannot believe in that doctrine!”

“Far more than you believe in yours,” said Morton solemnly.

“It is false! it is false! it is false!” cried the girl, clasping and wringing her hands. “If you were a Jew it is impossible that I could love you—a Jew!—It scorches my tongue to say the word—the mere name of your religion is a blasphemy.—Is it possible—tell me, is it true that you do not believe in Jesus Christ, that you do not love him? If so, Good God! what a horrible delusion—a life of blasphemy, and death undying. And that I should have believed in you so utterly, trusted you, adored you—and then when I thought we should live united forever, one in heart and soul, to be told—O Christ! to be told this hideous secret.—Why do you not write the hideous fact on your forehead? Why, when you saw me flying towards you, did you not say to me: ‘Stand aside, for I am accursed of God and man?’”

“To what frenzy does your bigotry lead you!” said Morton, looking down at her compassionately.

“Accuse me, if you will, of having concealed the truth, but do not attack my unhappy race nor yield to a vulgar prejudice that is unworthy of you.”

✓ “If what you tell me is true,” Gloria rushed on, “why could you not look as hideous as your religion? Why were not your words, your actions, and your person as execrable as your creed? Traitor! a thousand times a traitor!”

“Gloria, Gloria, love of my life, for pity’s sake, control yourself. Your reproaches are killing me.”

“Why have you cheated me of my love? Why did you let me love you when you knew that to all eternity we must be parted?” The poor child was wild with trouble, almost frenzied. “Tell me, why—why did you allow me to love you?”

“Because I loved you. It is true, I did wrong, though I knew it was a sin—then, foreseeing the tremendous religious struggle that hung over us, I proposed to you that we should part; the proposal was mine; I could not have acted more honorably—”

“But you came back again.”

✓ “I came back—” answered Morton, with the guilty confusion of a detected criminal. “Yes, I came back—I know not what brought me. Everything conspired to bring me back; I was borne on some blast from Hell—or, God knows!—on some breath from Heaven. Man is the sport of the divine forces that rule the world.”

“God knows? Do not utter His sacred name!

How transformed you are in my eyes; you are not yourself; I do not know whether I love you or hate you, and if such a state of mind were possible to any human being, I should say that I hate and love you both at once." And covering her face with her hands she broke into a torrent of tears.

"And all for a name, for a word!" cried Morton in agony. "Cruel, iniquitous! It is words that rule the world, and not ideas. Tell me, when you loved me, what was it you loved me for?"

"I loved you because I thought God had led you to me; I loved you for all you said and did, for yourself, for the sweet consent and agreement of our souls.— What for? How do I know?— But no—it was not then that I was deceived, it is now. You cannot be—what you say you are, Daniel, for you did deeds of pure charity."

"But our law tells us: 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord shall deliver him in time of trouble.'"

"You cannot belong to that abominable race," Gloria repeated, clinging to her incredulity as to a last hope. "If you swear it a thousand times, a thousand times will I deny it.—If you do, how false, how false you must be!"

"I have been false, yes. It is our custom, our

necessity, when we travel in a country such as yours. Still, to you I ought to have owned the truth; I acknowledge it, I confess it—I plead guilty, hoping for forgiveness.”

“And that I cannot forgive, no, not possibly,” said Gloria with stern determination.

“And yet your Master has bid you: ‘Forgive your enemies; love your neighbor as yourself.’ Is it conceivable that you should share the traditional rancor against us, the vulgar aversion on which the baser class of Christians batten their ignorance and their evil passions? Gloria! By the God who created heaven and earth! I cannot believe that you can so degrade your fine intelligence—”

“Within the fold of Christ, I admit and accept everything, outside it, nothing. The horror that fills my soul is not a mere prejudice.”

“And that horror would not exist but for a word—it would vanish if I could suppress its name. Tell me, does it not seem to you yourself a caricature of your own creed! Either I am mad, or this is the voice of all true humanity crying aloud for its rights.”

“Woe is me! for I cannot tell what it is—” cried Gloria deeply touched. “Why, being what you are, are you to me so entirely lovable? Your

soul, no doubt is lofty and good, and has kept itself unsoiled in the pit into which you were born. One struggle, my friend, one effort, and you will cast off this foul burden. Your spirit is ready for redemption; the slightest impulse, the least volition on your part is enough. Daniel, Daniel!" she continued clinging to him in passionate entreaty: "By your love for me—by mine for you, which this day must die the death or be infinitely increased, I implore you to be a Christian—Daniel give up your false religion, and let us throw ourselves together on the tender love and mercies of our Saviour Christ." Morton clasped her closely in his arms; then, gently putting her from him, he said in a low but steady voice:

"Abandon the religion of my fathers!—Never!"

Gloria sprang from his side, and gazed at him in dismay, as if he were some infernal vision whose beauty added to its horror, and which was all the more terrible for the seductive aspect it wore.

"What have you said?" she exclaimed.

"I, as well as you, have a family, parents, a name and my honor; and though we have no common country, we have a common interest in our sacred hearths and homes, and in the Holy

✓ Law in which we are born and die. From the time of my remote ancestors, who had settled at Córdoba and were exiled from Spain by an iniquitous edict, down to the present day, through a succession of generations of upright Hebrews, not one has ever abjured the Law of Moses."

"Not one!" said Gloria with bitter regret. "And do you believe that they now rejoice in the presence of God?"

"Such as were good men, as my father is, shall rejoice in Him through all generations," said Morton with exalted conviction. "No, no, you will not fill your hideous Christian Hell with Jews."

"I have always shut my eyes to that Hell, and tried not to believe in it," said Gloria, her gaze fixed with abstract horror, "and now I feel as if its fiery gulf yawned for me alone. Oh! what a horrible turmoil of confusion is in my mind! If there is no Hell, Daniel, if none exists as yet, there will be one created for you and me.—But no, I will save you, I will save myself. I deserve to suffer in eternal torment if I fail.—Daniel, awake! open your eyes and come to me!"

"To come to you in the sense you mean is impossible," said the Hebrew with gloomy determination.

"But then—oh! give me words to accuse you

in—what must my fate be? I see, in your creed conscience plays no part.”

“Nay, you may read my conscience as an open book.”

“There is no such grace and virtue as repentance.”

“If repentance consists in grief and shame, for having sinned, I can say: ‘O Lord, I have gone astray and Thy hand is heavy upon me, my grief is ever before me.’”

“There is no discipline, no confession of sins.”

“Yes, indeed, else why should we say: ‘Mine iniquities are gone over my head, as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me, therefore, I will acknowledge my sin and bewail my transgression.’”

“You say I may read your conscience?” continued Gloria. “No, no, I cannot read anything there. I see in it only the blackness of night—darkness as deep as my own disgrace, as the gulf into which we have both fallen. Kneel, kneel before this crucified Saviour, and then I will believe anything you may say.”

“I will kneel,” said Morton solemnly. “Not before the crucified prophet, in whom I cannot believe, but before you whom I adore, I will humiliate myself.” And falling on his knees at her feet he took her hands and kissed them. “May my

Father's curse fall upon me, and may he cut me off from among my kindred if I do not lay my soul open to you, if I conceal the smallest atom of truth.

“ I saw you, and as soon as I saw you, I loved you ; I believed that my shipwreck was an act of Providence, and that God had destined us for each other. Who can know His purpose or read in His book ? My faith in Him is full and perfect ; I see His hand in everything, and when I break His law, He appears to me more glorious and more terrible than ever.—I concealed my religion from you, alas ! out of utter selfishness. I knew the horror in which we are held by Catholics, and could not bear to ruin, with a single word, the happiness that blessed my soul. I knew you could not love me if you knew, and I was silent.—When I wished to speak, it was too late ; I loved you too much. I was entangled in the meshes of an insane passion ; I felt that my whole life was bound up in you, body and soul, and to reveal the truth was suicide.—Then I thought of all possible means of arranging a union with you, but the religious question always faced me, drove me mad, appalled me more than the thunders of Sinai or the vengeance of Jehovah. At last I saw plainly there was no issue, no solution. ✓ Our love was a

✓ horrible antagonism of God and man, a hideous absurdity, a living caricature of religious enmity in its most extravagant development; and seeing this I retreated, and tried to find strength of will to carry out the separation I had advised. We parted, avoided each other, because there was no alternative but to avoid each other as the night flies before the day.—Up to that point my iniquity was not so great?”

“ But afterwards—”

“ Afterwards—I never thought my resolution would waver. My heart was broken, but I had made ready to quit these shores forever, when the direct results of an act of charity, which, in itself, had neither importance nor merit, forced me to turn back. What led me to your house again, I swear to you I do not know—however, I do not believe in fatality, and it is my firm conviction that nothing happens without the express will of Him, whose hands formed the heavens and the earth, the soul of all that lives. I was the sport of a mysterious power; God sent me here, no doubt to tempt me, to prove the temper of my soul. I have fallen, I have not stood upright; I have fallen as David fell; I have wrought iniquity—what would you have me say?—but I love you, and this love will plead for me before God and

ought to win pardon from you. I do not attempt to excuse myself or throw any false light on my sin—”

“Ah! do not mention the name of God in the same breath with it—”

“I say: ‘Thy justice is as the hills, and Thy judgments are like the great deep, O Jehovah—’

This conflict of our souls is His doing and the love that consumes us. And if we curse our fate, at whom shall we rail? We dare not curse God—we will not curse our love—we can only curse the times, the perverse generations whose inhuman bigotry is our undoing.”

“Nay, curse your own race which, by crucifying Jesus, has put itself forever out of the pale of salvation,” cried Gloria vehemently. “I do not believe in your repentance, for your soul is in darkness. Leave me, quit this place, do not touch me! The very love I feel for you, and that I cannot cast out, increases my horror.”

“Oh! Gloria, Gloria!” exclaimed Morton in a tone of anguish. “Do not stoop to let me feel myself superior to you. I, though I hate Catholicism, can venerate you; I can distinguish between your false creed, which I abhor, and yourself, whom I value above all earthly things. You are to me like an angel, chosen from among the very

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children of light. I glory in worshipping you, and if you were my wife, not a woman in the world would be more venerated or more loved."

"I your wife, your wife! Ah! what are you saying?" moaned Gloria. "I, too, dreamed that dream; Merciful Heaven! dreamed it, and thought it possible. How could I look forward to this fearful struggle. God has forsaken me—God has abandoned me forever!"

"If your God has abandoned you," cried Morton, "mine will receive you. 'Thy decrees, oh Jehovah! are as the great deep!'"

"Leave me," cried Gloria turning from him. "Do not come near me."

But she could not prevent Morton from clasping her in his arms. Quelled and trembling, she slid down on her knees, and flinging her arms round him, she went on in a voice full of tears:

"Daniel, Daniel, see me kneeling at your feet—dishonored—lost in the eyes of God and the world. By the love I bear you, by the honor I have lost, by your reverence towards God and the sense of right that is in your soul, I implore you rescue me from this torment. Become a Christian; purge your soul, and with your soul my dishonor. You have wrought fearful ruin; repair it. Perhaps this is a warning from Heaven, for the doing

of a great sin has opened the eyes of many sinners.—If you love me be converted; be a Christian; kneel to this cross, and you will see how your spirit will be exalted, how immediately it will be filled with the true God.”

“Let us make a covenant,” said Morton, lifting her up.

“Well?”

“Follow me—”

“I—where?”

“Home—to my home.”

“Oh! you are out of your mind!”

“Follow me.”

“Very well,” cried Gloria, with enthusiasm. “Be baptized with water, believe in Jesus Christ, and I will follow you; I will forsake everything. Whatever my family may wish or say, I will follow you and accept my disgrace. Can I make any greater sacrifice? But it is well worth it to gain a soul to Christ.”

“My bargain is a different one,” Morton went on with feverish impatience. “Each of us wants to convert the other. If you win the day I will become a Catholic; if I do you shall be a Jewess.” Gloria covered her face in horror.

“It cannot, can never be,” she said. “The idea

of not being a Christian terrifies me more than that of eternal damnation."

"I cannot be a Christian.—No, I cannot."

"Daniel," murmured Gloria faintly, almost sick with misery, "why will you not kill me?—Find something, a knife, only kill me."

"Gloria, my life, why do you not kill me? It is I who should die, not you. I am the guilty one, not you—"

"There is nothing for it but to die."

"God has forsaken us—"

"There is no issue—"

"None in this world," said Morton gloomily.

"No, nor in Heaven!" added Gloria desperately. Her arms fell helplessly by her side, and she closed her eyes; all her vigor of spirit and mind was utterly spent.

She fell on her knees by the bed, and hiding her face prayed in silence. Morton sank into a chair, supporting his burning forehead in his hands.

Suddenly they both started up and looked at each other; they heard footsteps.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

JOB.

WE left the worthy Don Silvestre proudly exhibiting the pear-trees in his orchard, while Don Juan Amarillo, that bird of prey, took possession of Lantigua and drew him aside for the discussion of a serious piece of business.

We have already mentioned this man, whose name so happily suited his personal characteristics. Amarillo was not far from sixty, of deliberate manners, to the last degree methodical, domestic in his habits, great at telling his rosary, bland of speech, but keen-eyed; he commonly held his head somewhat on one side, like an early-ripe fig; his nose was sharp, his head bald; his black eyes were shaded by coarse rough lashes; his beard would have been thick, but he kept it shaved, and his face shone all over as yellow and as smooth as parchment. His one business was lending money; he was the banker of all Ficóbriga, and was ready to lift any man out of indigence at a rate of interest which never exceeded forty per cent.; obviously

on these terms no man need remain poor, and Amarillo was not behindhand in his profession.

With the fortune brought him by his wife, Teresita la Monja, and by good management and economy, in twenty years he could call himself very rich. He was on friendly terms with Don Juan de Lantigua, who was one of the few people to whom he had never lent any money. He enjoyed a reputation for being very religious, as did his wife, who was always very inquisitive as to the proceedings of her neighbors, and so well informed, as to their life and doings, that she was nicknamed the "Mother Confessor of Ficóbriga."

Amarillo took Lantigua's arm, and leading him apart along a covered alley to a retired part of the garden, he began:

"For some days, my dear Don Juan, I have been waiting to speak to you of a subject of some importance, and I ought not to let any more time slip away."

"What is it?" asked Don Juan, somewhat alarmed at the solemn tone adopted by his namesake.

"A very serious affair. What opinion, may I ask, have you of me as a man of veracity?"

"A perfectly favorable one."

"Do you consider me capable of a lie?"

“No, Señor, not even in thought.”

“Of backbiting, of calumny, or of false-witness against my neighbor?”

“Of none of these things.”

“Then listen and pay heed to the warnings of an honorable man who esteems you highly, and takes an interest in the honor of your name and family.”

“The honor of my name! Don Juan—” exclaimed Lantigua hotly. “What do you mean by that?”

“It is not husbands only that are blind; affectionate and confiding fathers are equally so.”

“I do not understand you—”

“Then I will explain myself in two words: You must be watchful, very watchful, of your daughter.”

“Of Gloria!” Don Juan almost shrieked in his surprise.

“Of Señorita Gloria,” the Christian Jew repeated. “She is good, I have no doubt, but she is at the dangerous age of passion.—Not that I see any objection to a young girl having a lover, but at least let him be a Catholic.”

“Don Juan, what jest is this?” said Lantigua, turning as yellow as his interlocutor.

“Do you think me capable of falsifying a fact,

of failing in truth, or of mortifying a friend without reason? When I made up my mind to venture to speak to you, Señor, it was because I was sure, absolutely certain, of the facts. Gloria has had clandestine meetings with Daniel Morton."

"Where?—when?" cried Lantigua, turning from the yellow of dismay to the scarlet of wrath.

"In the pine-grove, a few days ago—and I may tell you that my wife was the first to warn me, and that then I saw with my own eyes.—As it was said that Morton was going away, I held my tongue; but when I heard his Reverence the Bishop say that he had seen Morton going into Ficóbriga, I was alarmed, and said to myself: 'This evening shall not pass without my telling the whole story to my friend Don Juan.'"

"By Heaven!" cried Lantigua clenching his fists and grinding his teeth. "If what you tell me is true.— Who saw them? Who?"

"My wife, and other persons of the town. Morton came on horseback from the capital of the province, where he was staying; and making a round, so as not to go through Ficóbriga, he went down to the pine-grove where he waited for her."

After the first shock, Lantigua had sunk into deep and sullen thought, vacillating between incredulity and alarm. A keen pang had pierced

his heart and he could not utter a word. He felt as if all the illusions of a lifetime had been dashed down at a blow, and he felt like the holy Chaldaean Job, when a servant came and said to him: "Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, and behold their came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men and they are dead." But Don Juan neither rent his mantle, nor shaved his head, nor fell upon the ground; but presently, recovering a little from the surprise, if not from the pain of the blow, he said to himself: "It is a lie, it is a lie!"

"We shall be wise to take shelter in the house, friend Lantigua," said Amarillo presently. "It is raining."

And it certainly was raining. All the party rushed into the house for shelter, and the servants hastily carried in the table and the rest of the utensils and furniture.

"It will soon be over," said Lantigua looking at the sky.

"I believe," said Romero, "that we shall have a second edition of that famous day, when we saved the men from the wreck of the Plantagenet. And what a day that was, gentlemen! Rain above

and the waves below—I, I confess, was horribly frightened—”

“Let us go!” said Don Juan suddenly, and with an air of extreme impatience.

“While it rains? Bless me! Don Juan, what a hurry you are in!”

“I want to be off. It will be worse if we wait till it rains harder and till night has closed in.”

“Just as you please,” said Don Angel.

Don Silvestre sent to order out Lantigua's coach, but by the time it was ready the rain had increased to such a torrent, that all agreed that they must wait till the storm had passed over; the roads would be impassable, and Lantigua's coachman, as well as the driver of the break, declared that nothing short of a miracle would enable them to reach Ficóbriga without damage.

“Never mind!” said Lantigua. “Let us start!”

But at this instant the news was brought that the bridge had been broken down and that no vehicle could cross.

“This is a day of misfortunes,” growled Don Juan stamping his foot.

“The bridge broken down! That is just like our engineers.—What a Government we live under! With the money that has been wasted on this

wretched wooden thing, they might have built a bridge of solid masonry."

"There is no remedy but patience," said the Bishop calmly.

"There is no remedy but to set out on foot," said Don Juan. "It is most unlucky; we have not even umbrellas."

"But are you mad? Where are you going?" said Don Angel detaining his brother.

"Gracious me! Don Juan—one might think your house was on fire!"

The road was in fact impassable; foaming cataracts of mud and water were pouring down the hill. However, Romero proposed that a lad of his, named Francisquin, should go down to reconnoitre the state of things all the way to Ficóbriga; in a short time he returned, saying that the road was passable, and that with great care the bridge could be crossed on foot.

"What cowards we are!" exclaimed Lantigua going towards the door. But, for the second time they stopped him, and then it was that Romero said:

"You had better all pass the night here. We have very good beds. The river has risen frightfully, and it is not worth while to run the risk of drowning. If we go up as far as Villamojada, to

cross the bridge of San Mateo, we shall lose at least five hours, because, as you know, the earth that has washed down has made the roads heavy."

It was a matter of great difficulty to persuade Don Juan to remain, but at last they succeeded, and, as we have already learnt, a message was sent to his house.

When Francisquin returned his report was as follows: "Señorita Gloria was waiting in the greatest alarm, but now she is quite easy."

"And who was there?" asked Don Juan with eager anxiety.

"Roque, Don Amancio the apothecary, José, the postman, the school-master Rubio, German—"

"No one else?"

"And Señor Morton."

And again through the fevered brain of Don Juan flashed the words, from the book of Job: "The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep and the servants, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

"What is the matter, Don Juan? Has your dinner disagreed with you?" asked Don Silvestre looking at his friend.

"Are you ill?" said the Bishop affectionately. Don Juan had in fact turned green.

“Let me feel your pulse,” said Romero, who dabbled in medicine.

“By the way,” remarked one of the curé’s guests, who had come from the capital of the province, “a friend I met in Villamojada, and who is lately come from Madrid, informed me as to the religion of that Señor Morton who has just been mentioned. He is neither more nor less than a Jew.”

An exclamation of surprise and horror broke from every one in the room.

“Is that true?” asked Lantigua with a fiery sparkle in his eyes.

“Nothing can be truer! Daniel Morton is the son of an immensely rich Hebrew of Hamburg, a Rabbi of their religion—or as we might say, supreme Pontiff or Pope among the Jews.”

“Considering this even, I cannot be sorry that I saved his life,” said Don Silvestre with vehemence. “For it is written: ‘Bless those that curse you, and do good to those that hate you.’—What a day that was!”

“Well said,” remarked the Bishop, pressing the curé’s hand. “This is the spirit that I approve of.”

And then he sat as mute as a statue.

“In my opinion,” said Don Juan Amarillo

solemnly, "we ought not to permit this man's presence in Ficóbriga."

"We ought not to permit it," two or three of the party agreed.

Then his Reverence spoke thus:

"So long as the impious lives the hope also lives that he may be led into the right road. Saint Augustine, my friends, has taught us that the impious man is suffered to live *ut corrigatur, ut per illum bonum exerceatur*; that is to say, that he may be taught right, and that by reason of him good deeds may be accomplished in us."

Don Juan rose and said decidedly:

"I am going."

His resolute tone indicated a determination so fixed that no one dared attempt to hinder him, and the Bishop, who was beginning to share his brother's uneasiness, added:

"I too must go."

"We will go round by Villamojada," said Don Juan.

"How rash!" said Don Silvestre in an undertone to del Horro. "But when once Don Juan has an idea in his head.—And there is something wrong. Did you see the color he turned? He has an attack of fever."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE THUNDER-BOLT.

GLORIA and Daniel Morton had heard footsteps, and both trembled as they stood there; neither dared move an inch; neither could utter a syllable; they held their breath, and only wished they were invisible air and could vanish into space.

Suddenly the door opened and Don Juan stood in the doorway. Gloria uttered a wild cry; she could not have been more terror-stricken if she had heard the trump of Judgment and seen the Lord of souls appearing among clouds of fire to judge the quick and the dead.

Don Juan went straight up to his daughter, his arm raised—then, as if the ground had suddenly failed under his feet, he fell, a dead weight on the floor, with a deep groan. His venerable head hit hard upon the ground. Don Angel, who had followed him, Sedeño, Gloria, and Morton all hurried to assist the unhappy father. They examined him—he seemed to be dead.

They cried for help, and the servants came trooping in. As they were lifting him up, Don Angel pushed aside Morton with a strong hand.

“Deicide, stand off. Go!” he said.

For the first time in his life wrath was written on the features of the illustrious son of Ficóbriga.

The Jew went out like a dead man endowed with motion.

Meanwhile the doctor had been fetched, and on seeing Don Juan he said he had been seized with apoplexy and could not live many hours; nevertheless, they set to work with anxious haste to apply every remedy that could be suggested, to arrest the progress of the attack and snatch his prey from Death. The victim was perfectly insensible, and his pulse alone revealed the last desperate struggle for life that was going on.

Gloria was so absolutely stricken by remorse and grief that when she was led away from the side of the sufferer into her own room, she could not resist, nor even move. She had fallen on her knees, and there remained, as if petrified, her eyes staring at the ground in fixed horror—like a marble statue intended to commemorate some great disaster or to impersonate Eternal Damnation. Through her trance of sorrow she heard the steps of the priests who came upstairs bearing the

last sacraments—then again she heard them go down, just as the windows were growing grey with the light of a dawn even sadder than the chill and murky night.

At last Gloria saw her uncle come in; he stood before her and said simply: "Your father is dead."

And the saintly man put his fists in his eyes and began to cry like a child.

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GLORIA.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

SERAFINITA AND DON BUENAVENTURA DE LANTIGUA.

OUR story now takes a leap to April, to the Holy Week, which that year fell very late. The Spring, on the other hand had been remarkably early, and the Festival of the Annunciation brought a heap of roses and pinks. Seldom had Ficóbriga appeared so gay at these religious festivals, which are the most interesting of all to the soul and eyes of the Christian; and besides the delightful season and delicious weather, with which Nature favored them, this devout little town had other reasons for rejoicing; and in that year there were processions, and festivals of which former years had been barren by reason of the poverty of the clergy, and the disastrous falling off in the zeal of the laity. That year there were processions, because two worthy members of the society of Ficóbriga had offered

Gloria. II.

to defray the cost out of their private purse.—Don Buenaventura and Doña Serafina, the brother and sister of the Reverend Don Angel and of Don Juan Crisóstomo, deceased suddenly on St. James' day of the previous year. In a former chapter allusion has been made to these excellent persons, but there was then no occasion for enlarging much on their merits; now they must come forward.

“Venturita and Serafina,” said Don Juan Amarillo's wife to her friends, as they stood in the portico of the Abbey, “came to Ficóbriga with the intention which we all know—and when they say that it was to settle matters under Don Juan's will, that is a mere farce and subterfuge. That unfortunate gentleman, who died as if he had been struck by lightning, left his affairs and his papers in the most perfect order—but it was necessary to say something that the public might not suspect the truth.—Ah! the truth! Happy are they who, like myself, value it above everything else!—And the truth is that—” Here Teresita la Monja dropped her voice and whispered a few mysterious words to the friends nearest to her. The ladies smiled and crossed themselves, as they went into the church, where mass was about to begin.

In point of fact, Don Buenaventura and his sister had come to Ficóbriga—she in the previous

September, and he in March, only a week or two since—on matters which in no way related to the will of their deceased brother. Excellent persons both! It is true, that regarding them as members of the incomparable and illustrious family of Lantigua, no one could wonder at the moral perfection and noble gifts of mind which seemed as inseparable from their race, as cleverness or beauty are from some others.

Serafinita was next in age to the late Don Juan, the Bishop being the eldest and Don Buena-ventura the youngest. He was happily married, and the yet more happy father of a numerous family; his sister on the other hand was a widow and had never had a child. She was remarkable for such a complete resemblance to Don Angel, that to see her was to see his Reverence in petticoats, with her hair dressed in a fashion that was neither old-fashioned nor new, a black dress devoid of any pretensions to elegance, though perfectly neat, and on occasion, black thread gloves, and a black mantle, and a mourning-ring on one of the fat red fingers of her right hand. On days when the wind blew from the north-east—a breeze which is only too favorable to neuralgia—she was wont to wrap up her head in a black shawl, and when damp weather made her limp with her left leg, in

consequence of a fatal disposition to rheumatism acquired many years since, she helped herself along with a black walking-stick. But on fine, mild days, when the weather was to be trusted, and was favorable to the enjoyment of nature, she would go and take a turn on the sea-shore accompanied by Francisca; there, seating herself on a rock, she would pull out of a deep bag the work she always carried with her, and knit away diligently at a stocking, also black.

Her face was calm and pleasant, and her cheeks were of a pale, withered rose-color, like a flower faded and dried by time. Just as with Don Angel, with her a smile was the most characteristic and constant expression of her mood, and her pretty clear eyes, which had seen so much of the world and wept over so many troubles, twinkled with a certain merry flash amid the sombre blackness of all that surrounded her. And, in the same way Serafinita's spirit preserved its courage and its confidence with that fine temper which comes of a clear conscience and immovable faith, in the midst of the storms of a trying life; and indeed, they had been so many that few women had suffered more than she had. Of her married life it might be said, as of hell, that it had been the combination of all possible ills without

the admixture of anything good. The man whom she had married, as a matter of family arrangement, united in himself every possible wickedness, vice and coarseness—he was a libertine and a cheat; dissipated, cruel, and false. The hapless Serafinita endured with resignation ill-treatment and infidelity, with stinting and insults to which she had never been accustomed; she witnessed endless scandals, and the disgrace of the intervention of the authorities, a thousand quarrels and mean tricks, and, at last, was even brutally handled in her own person by the monster who should have protected her. On one occasion he hit her in public, and on another, when they were alone, tore her hair. Her steady temper and resignation with her modest virtue, only served to infuriate him more, as if through her heroic silence he heard the anathemas due to his atrocious conduct. In this horrible struggle, the greater courage was displayed by the crushed victim, and the barbarous victor was the coward.

At last the avenging hand of God came to the rescue; the wretched husband fell ill of a horrible disease, and the ill-used wife saw the opportunity for a noble revenge. The Christian virtue that was so deeply rooted in her soul bore its fruit; she overwhelmed him with kindness, con-

quered him with care, crucified him, so to speak, with tender solicitude and attention. It was said that the wretched man died penitent, and Serafinita herself, speaking of his death, would say :

“The Devil gave him back to me and I gave him back to God. I stole a march on Satan.”

When she became a widow she expressed a desire to withdraw from the world and consecrate her life to God, and in truth she had labored abundantly in the vineyard and had earned her reward and rest; but Don Juan's death, and all the terrible circumstances that had accompanied it, had diverted her from her pious purpose; the voice of the Master had told her that she was needed yet a little while in the world, and from the gate of the convent she set out for Ficóbriga.

Don Buenaventura was not strikingly like the rest of the family, but for goodness, high-mindedness and sense he was no discredit to the house of Lantigua. He was the least attractive, while Don Juan had been the handsomest of the four; to compensate for this he seemed much the happiest. He was in business as a banker, and had been able to increase his estate and to live most comfortably, esteemed by all who knew him, and in the bosom of an exemplary family, who were able to enjoy every pleasure that was not an offence to virtue.

Indeed, Don Buenaventura had not, like his brother, declared war against the present generation; his character was more frank and jolly, his humor more easy and liberal, his conscience less rigid, his ideas more elastic, though less brilliant, and he had a greater facility for adapting himself to new aspects and conditions; and as a result of these characteristics—which each of my readers must take for what they are worth in his own eyes—of the easy circumstances of his life, and of the good-will that smiled upon him, go where he would, he was disposed to believe that the world was not so bad as some folks make out, and that the social order of the present day was not the most atrocious and debased of all possible societies.

The death of Don Juan, to whom he was devotedly attached, had a disastrous effect upon his spirits, and for the misfortune of his unhappy niece he was quite inconsolable. In the March following he came to Ficóbriga; his fellow-townsmen hailed him with delight, and it was currently reported that Don Buenaventura was projecting something highly interesting to his family and to the honor of his deceased and disgraced brother. Was this the fact? That his mind was deeply occupied there could be no doubt. He might be

seen walking on the shore, or lingering for hours in the cemetery watching the building of the monument to his brother that was being constructed, or wandering alone in the grounds round the house, avoiding all friendly companionship—his hands behind his back, his head sunk forward, his eyes fixed on the ground, his brow somewhat knit, his steps long and slow. Now and again he would stop and look up to the sky, as if about to utter some special prayer; but would at once return to his study of the earth at his feet—perhaps because his prayer found no answer.

He wore a black coat of an easy cut, and long boots of yellow tan, proof against mud and sand; and this queer combination of colors gave rise to a saying among the idlers of the town, who passed all their time gossiping at the apothecary's shop: "Here comes the blackbird." He was tall and slightly built, and stooped, no doubt in consequence of the hours spent in his office over his books and letters. His face, though commonplace, was agreeable; one of those work-a-day countenances which seem made for a healthy life of social intercourse, and always closely shaved, for among the Lantiguas a sort of semi-ecclesiastical appearance was traditional. He had hardly a grey hair, but by a cord round his neck hung a

pair of blue glasses which he wore in any very bright light, for his eyes—which would not shed a tear at any pain, watered involuntarily under the mid-day sun. He rarely used a walking-stick; his hands commonly found their way behind his back, where they met and clasped, and patted each other, with all the cordiality of old friends. Such was Don Buenaventura de Lantigua.

It was the last Friday in Lent; returning from an errand in the town, he came upon his sister, who was sitting on a bench in the garden knitting at her black stocking, and pausing in front of her he spoke.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT THEY SAID.

“HAS she not been out to-day even?” asked Don Buenaventura.

“Not even to-day,” answered Serafinita without looking up from her work. “Poor child! You are answerable Ventura for the state of her mind. For my part I do not know how she lives, or how it is she does not die of grief, and solitude, and shame.”

“Still, it is necessary,” he said kindly, “that she should not die of any one of these three things, but that she should live.”

“Live!” exclaimed Doña Serafina with a sigh. “Aye, it is our duty to live; but for some of us it is a burthensome duty enough—I quite understand the misery of my poor brother’s hapless daughter—a flower broken down by the brutal foot of an ass that in a moment of neglect strayed into the garden!—No, in all my long life, I never knew a case at all like it, nor heard of a fall like hers unless it is the fall of Satan.—It is of no use to tell me that there is any remedy in this world, Ventura. You have simply lost your wits if you persist in saying that this matter can be mended—”

“There is a remedy for everything in the world,” said Don Buenaventura, taking an iron garden-chair and sitting down so as to face his sister.

“Ventura,” said Serafinita looking up from her black knitting. “Remember what our Reverend brother said to us when he started for Rome in January.”

“I remember perfectly.”

“He said these very words: ‘My dear brother and sister, with respect to our poor Gloria, you must proceed with due regard to the views and

feelings of our beloved brother Juan, now in heaven. Act as he would have acted if he had survived the wreck of his honor. Let us draw inspiration from our memories of him, and prove ourselves the worthy heirs to his rule of conduct, though we cannot inherit his powerful mind. I will not, even in Rome, forget this terrible affair, and when I return I shall hope to see some light in it."

"Yes—that is what he said," answered her brother. "And I believe that the best way to carry out the ideas our poor Juan would have had in the matter, is to act as our own conscience dictates. Juan would have done so himself."

"Conscience!" exclaimed Serafinita shaking her head. "That is a word which by dint of use has come to mean nothing. Conscience! Alas! Ventura, it is plain to me that yours is ready to accommodate itself to a leniency which is but little less disgraceful than the very disgrace it is intended to evade, and that you are open to what the world calls a compromise, an arrangement. I entreat you to reflect whether, under these terrible circumstances, we can do anything more or less than bow under the blow which God has seen fit to deal us all, overwhelming us with ignominy. Is there anything to be done but to moan and succumb and weep over our disgrace, and do our best

to conceal a dishonor that ought never to be revealed?"

"The whole affair will be public property."

"No," said Serafinita warmly and with some pride. "There are things that shall never be known—or at any rate, not at present. I will answer for that; my own prudence and discretion are a security that the vicious tongues of Ficóbriga shall not wag over my secrets."

"They will, even over what you keep secret."

"Well then, be it so. If it is God's will that our disgrace must be still greater, so it must be. I am prepared for the worst; nothing can appall me now. It is the Lord's will to prove us. Blessed be His hand!"

"Yea, amen!" said Don Buenaventura.

"No," retorted Serafinita quickly. "You cannot say amen; you cannot bless the hand that has stricken us, for you seek to rebel and escape it; you seek to find some compromise, some evasion, some ingenious manœuvre, which can result in nothing good so far as our conscience and faith are concerned. What is it you propose? Let us see; explain yourself."

"What I propose is just what is always done when such a misfortune befalls an honorable family," replied Buenaventura very coolly.

“If the present case were in the least similar to those which occur constantly in our rank of life that might do very well,” said his sister, feeling that her arguments were unanswerable. “But you know very well that since the creation of the world such a case has never been known, at any rate in Spain. √ I could almost believe that an event altogether so horrible had been permitted by God as a warning to the Spanish nation of the fearful troubles that await it—”

“Sister,” said Don Buenaventura interrupting her, “without knowing it you have said a very profound thing.”

“Do not laugh at me,” said Serafinita, scratching her ear with one of her knitting-needles. “What I mean to say is that if the catastrophe that causes us so much grief were like any other.—Good Heavens! I am sickened with seeing poor children ruined by an hour’s folly or some wretched delusion—but still, among ourselves, custom, religion and paternal kindness can repair the mischief by marriage.”

“And why should we not try to achieve such an issue?”

Serafina gazed at her brother in amazement, and dropping her stocking on to her lap, exclaimed:

“You are mad! Ventura; why, for the blessing of the Church to be spoken over so horrible a tie—for it to absolve first and bind afterwards!—the world would have to be unmade and created afresh on a new pattern; we should see society drop asunder, piece by piece, with all its beliefs, its divisions of class, and its laws, and then be re-constituted according to your pleasure and caprice.”

“It might be improved by the process,” said her brother, smiling and see-sawing his chair.

“Well, then, set to work and mend the work of God and time!”

“No, no, my dear sister,” said Lantigua with determination. “I do not want to mend the work of God, nor to turn the world upside down. I fully recognize the force of the arguments you have used. Still, is it not both the wiser and the more Christian course to try every plan before we declare that the mischief is irremediable? All the evil which falls within the sphere of human experience is open to human remedy.”

“The remedy for this is in your fancy. You speak like a child, Ventura. It is not possible that a false and a true religion should meet and mingle like wine and water when you pour them into one jar; it is impossible that our holy Catholic faith

should compromise such a matter, or humble itself before the sacrilegious falsities of an infamous sect, and I therefore cannot see how you propose to 'arrange' the affair."

"I propose, in fact, to make an attempt which would, if successful, achieve a great triumph for the faith," said Buenaventura.

"What! Convert him?—Really you are mad. Do you believe you can succeed where our Reverend brother himself failed? Perhaps you will try to convert him through a system of business transactions! The hearts of these people are more pervious to sentiments of exchange and profit than to religious arguments."

"But when my brother tried to convert him the present weighty social reasons had not yet arisen; now his honor is gravely compromised, and his duties, merely as a man, his delicacy, his dignity—"

"Honor, delicacy, dignity, humanity! He probably would not understand such language, nor even the disgrace he has brought upon us."

"It is the universal language of human souls. However, my dear sister, we can soon remove our doubts."

"How?"

"By hearing him speak for himself."

“What! you—that man?” cried Serafina in horror.

“He is coming here; I sent for him.”

“Ventura!—” Serafinita could say no more; she was incapable of rage, but her spirit was grieved. Taking up her work again with a sort of frenzied energy, she fixed her eyes on the points of her two knitting-needles, which, rapidly jerking and crossing each other, looked like the swords of two combatants fighting a furious duel. After a short silence, she began again:

“Ventura! and you wrote to the Jew?”

“Yes, and he is coming.”

“Quite as likely not. You know he came in December, and Gloria would not see him.”

“Yes, I know.”

“And he has written her several letters—”

“Which she would not condescend to read; yes, I know.”

“Then she will not receive him now.”

“That remains to be seen. I do not think that my coming to Ficóbriga has been in vain, nor that she will mock at my authority,” said Lantigua, with some confidence in the power of his will.

“But, my dear brother, you are surely forgetting Angel’s warning.”

“Not at all; he said: ‘Do as Juan Crisóstomo would have done had he been alive.’”

“And do you believe,” said Serafinita, in a triumphant tone, confident that her position was impregnable, “Do you believe that our brother would ever have written to that man to ask him here?”

“I do not know. Juan never was able to say a word on the subject of his dishonor; he died speechless.”

“Juan did not die of apoplexy,” said Doña Serafinita, with deep emotion. “He died of anger; it was his indignation that killed him. His spirit was ablaze, and his soul fled in horror from his body in that-overwhelming hour. The sky seemed to fall in upon him, and I can fancy that I heard the dumb cry of his spirit as it escaped all bruised from this world.—Ventura, try to feel with the feelings of our brother, who died of this disgrace; identify yourself with him, and realize what that terrible moment was to him—his astonishment, his horror, his anguish as a tender father and a devout Catholic. Throw yourself into his place, and try to believe that you are he, that he has come to life again in your person.—”

“I act according to my own conscience,” said the banker calmly, “and in so doing I believe I am acting according to his.”

And rising from his seat he clasped his hands behind his back, and with his habitual slight stoop, he began to pace the garden from one corner to another, without lifting his eyes from the gravel that crunched under his yellow boots. Serafinita, after undoing a long piece of the black stocking, which was very badly knitted, began to knit it up again.

CHAPTER III

SUSPENSE.

THE house was no longer what it used to be; the garden was much neglected, and the spring flowers, which bloomed among the green-sward, flourished with a freedom that betrayed their independence of the gardener's care. The shrubs and shady trees, the clipped hedges, the turf, the creepers with their hundred waving arms, and the overgrown pot-plants, were all visibly suffering under the dominion of oblivion. The snails, on the contrary, had had a fine time of it during these last months and disported themselves, a vast and insatiate host, over everything green, creeping up the shoots to trail their slime over the very top-

most leaves—a fitting office for these emblems of calumny and envy. One or two had even made so bold as to creep up Doña Serafinita's skirt, and gaze at her with their specks of eyes and move their knowing little horns, as if to say: "What have you come here for, dame?"

Outside the house the damage done during the past winter had not been repaired; patches of whitewash and bits of cornice wanted restoring, and the gutters being out of order, the eastern wall displayed a large damp stain looking like a huge irregular shadow, and which had accidentally taken the shape of a monster with many legs and threatening jaws. The weather-cock had bent under the assaults of the winds, and the arrow, leaning all one side, pointed immovably to the north. It was dead.

Inside, the melancholy results of neglect were no less apparent. Some of the rooms had not been opened for many weeks. The clock with its large face and loud bell, which stood in the hall to proclaim to all the inmates the hours of duty, of pleasure, of labor and of rest, had sunk into dumbness, and its chubby bright face, which had been wont to answer all who questioned it as to the time, had ceased to express anything, as though it also had fallen into the rigid and sullen

silence of death. It was in vain that Don Buena-ventura had tried to revive its energies by moving it with his finger, now pushing on the hands and now swinging the pendulum; the clock would give two or three spasmodic jerks, two or three plaintive ticks and then relapse into lethargy. The very stillness of the hands on the white dial with its circle of numbers, in some way reminded one of closed eyelids and hushed breath. It was like looking at a face in calm, deep sleep.

In one of the upper rooms there was another smaller clock which had turned wag and laughed at the tricks it played its masters, and the confusion it produced. Its behavior was more befitting a mountebank than a clock; thus, at six o'clock it would mark and strike eleven, or vice versa, and sometimes it would quietly skip over mid-day altogether, or persist in asserting that the hour of sunrise was after high-mass. And whenever this worthy piece of mechanism played off its little jokes, Francisca would say, sadly enough:

“Go on, my little friend, go on; you are not the only thing that is out of gear. Everything in the house is in the same plight.”

Don Juan's rooms, his bedroom and study, had remained locked up till Don Buenaventura arrived, and he, taking them for his own use, sat there for

hours at a time, sorting his brother's manuscripts and letters and making a catalogue of the library. Serafinita lived on the ground-floor, as she could not easily go up and down stairs, and Gloria remained in the room she had always had.

But for many months the natives of Ficóbriga had not seen Gloria in the streets, nor in the garden, nor in the balcony; even the servants of the house, with the exception of the two maids, had not seen her. Where was she? What was she doing? There was no lack of tongues in Ficóbriga to say that the Señorita de Lantigua had been hideously stricken, nor of others to hint she had gone mad. Her uncle and aunt gave out that she was ill both in body and mind—Teresita la Monja announced a hundred abominable facts in her sibylline whispers, and not an inhabitant of the town ever passed along the high-road, or across the little plaza, without looking up at the dismal windows, closed and shuttered like sleeping eyes, and saying to himself: "What will come of it?"

During all these months Gloria had been the subject of endless commentary. Curiosity had been busy enough, and malice not less so. It was easy to demonstrate that the best reputations are hardly ever deserved, that nothing is genuinely lofty or sublime, that everything is in fact mean

and contemptible; that even flowers are but the offspring of clay, that a diamond is not solidified light but mere carbon—in short, that we are all alike, and that if any succeed in rising to any height by dint of hypocrisy or worldly knowledge, he ought to be brought down again to the level of the rest, to preserve the vulgar uniformity which is so necessary to the world in general.

Was the world right? Who can decide without an intimate knowledge of the circumstances and the people? Gloria was hidden from everyone; invisible to every eye, her life was an inscrutable mystery; like the busy worm she had shrouded herself in a cocoon of her own making, intending, perhaps, never to quit it unless with wings, or transformed into a Psyche. If I and my readers force a way into the house, we shall not be admitted into her presence, for the servants stop all intruders. Even the dumb clock in the hall seems to wonder in its silence whither our rash steps tend, and to proclaim: 'No thoroughfare.' Still, we seem to hear a light step on the upper floor—the young girl's footfall perhaps—no, only a kitten at play; nor, with the utmost attention, shall we catch the sound of her voice; it seems to have become as dumb as that of the clock, feeling itself unworthy to be heard among the living. If we

go boldly upstairs we shall not see her; her door is closed. After dark, if, for a moment we find it open, we may catch sight of the shadow of a head upon the wall; it moves, it is certainly she, but only her pale dim image without life or soul; and though there are voices within, all we can hear with the keenest attention is a faint sibilation characteristic of the Castilian accent—like the hissing of light foam on the waves—the tones are too faint for us to catch a word.

Still, watching through the chink of the door, which is not closely shut, we presently are aware of a ruddier and brighter light which is soon burnt out; beyond a doubt the girl has been destroying a paper. From Roque, who is ready enough to tell the little he knows, we learn that Gloria, not long since, received a letter with red stamps, which were not Spanish. Presently Francisca comes out, Don Buenaventura goes in; a more eager conversation begins, which is carried on till a very late hour. Still we can catch nothing but the sharp *sses* which float to our ear, but reveal nothing. At last Don Buenaventura withdraws, as meditative as ever; we hear the sleepy, muttered prayers that are said before going to bed, and then Serafinita comes out of the room, with an air of tranquil mysticism, like a saint descending

from her niche for gentle exercise. Then we hear the key turn in the lock. Farewell!—Gloria has locked herself in.—Now she sleeps; wrapped in a veil of silence, darkness and repose, her spirit is winging its way through the infinite realms of dream-fancy. Our indiscretion leads us to listen at the key-hole. Hark! Nothing?—Nothing. At most the tiny buzz of some minutest insect on the wing, and a hardly audible rhythm, which may be Gloria's regular breathing or the fanning of the wings of her guardian-angel, which watches with a hand laid tenderly on her brow.

But one day, it was the Saturday before Palm Sunday, this voracious historian watched to some purpose. On the stairs there was suddenly perceptible a perfume of pinks and roses—an adjunct of her person which seemed part of herself. Gloria was making a nosegay. If, just now, we had been in the garden, we should have heard a slight sound at the upper window, and looking up with a prompt curiosity, we should have seen a hand which was put out for a moment to fling away a quantity of flower-stems and useless sprays. This was the same hand that we saw some weeks since vainly endeavor to hold the door of the house against Morton. But as to her face, it could be seen only by the birds perched like a regiment on

the telegraph-wire or flying past with a twitter and chirp.

Francisca went down to fetch more flowers, and Doña Serafinita herself went up with some stocks she had gathered, and then the snipping of scissors was to be heard cutting the stems that were too long for the nosegay. Even Roque, who knew everything, did not know what this bouquet was for.

It was late in the afternoon when Don Buena-ventura entered the dining-room, in company with the two most important personages in the town of Ficóbriga. These, of course, could be none others than Don Silvestre Romero and Don Juan Amarillo; this latter gentleman had lately been raised to the dignity of Alcalde (or magistrate), and his respectability, at all times very imposing, had become absolutely sublime.

Don Silvestre, soon after his appearance in the dining-room, went upstairs, as he said, to see "his beloved penitent;" he was one of the few who enjoyed the privilege of seeing her—and Don Buenaventura being left alone with the dignity of the law, Don Juan enlarged upon the last deliberations of the town council with reference to the processions for Holy-week, which were to be at the cost of the liberal banker, and which, according to

ancient custom, were to be two; one representing the Entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and the other the Stations of the Cross, on the following Thursday. To all this Don Buenaventura was ready to assent; but he was less well pleased when the representative of the municipality went on to say that it would be regarded as becoming in him—the actual Señor de Lantigua—to fill a conspicuous place in both the processions, particularly in that on Palm Sunday, when he was expected to accompany the sacred image which had been given to the church by his illustrious family.

However, it must be said that this and other similar matters discussed by the officious magistrate, such as the latest decision of the town council to designate the little plaza in front of the Abbey, as the Plaza de Lantigua, and to deposit a wreath in the tomb that was being built for the late Don Juan—were mere pretexts to lead up to a subject of far more pressing interest to himself. Ever since the final catastrophe on St. James' day last, it had been now and again rumored in Ficóbriga, that the unfortunate girl, who till then had been called the jewel of Ficóbriga, was about to enter a convent, and that the family were thinking of selling the house, having taken a dislike to it as the scene of so great a misfortune. This

notion having once been started, Don Juan Amarillo—who, as we know, was master of considerable wealth, gained Heaven knows how—was possessed with the happy idea of acquiring so charming a property and settling himself upon it, making it the seat of his omnipotence and of the vast importance he held in Ficóbriga and the neighborhood. The crowning hope, the predominant idea in Amarillo's mind, was to be "the first person in Ficóbriga;" and the ruling thought, which was the mainspring of all the moral and intellectual machinery of his wife, Teresita, was to be "the first lady in Ficóbriga."

The presence of the Lantiguas had long been the great stumbling-block, for they enjoyed traditional respect, and the town faithfully obeyed the gospel injunction not to serve two masters. But if the Lantiguas were to abdicate, since the jewel of Ficóbriga was to be enclosed in the safe casket of a convent, then the Amarillo dynasty would reign without a rival from the sea to Pesqueruela, from the hill of Fronilde to Monteluz; and the crowning glory of this dominion, its outward and visible symbol, would be the acquisition and occupation of the palace in which the Lantiguas had dwelt.

Both husband and wife could have no peace

while in suspense as to the final issue, and Don Juan was incessantly plying the banker with indiscreet questions. Now to-day again he repeated his proposals to purchase the house, but Don Buenaventura could not give him any definite answer.

“But before long I believe that I shall be able to give you a final answer,” said the banker. “It will have to be settled soon, very soon.”

At this moment they heard measured and heavy steps on the stairs, as if a giant were coming down. It was only Don Silvestre returning from his visit, and carrying an enormous nosegay, while he buried his big nose again and again among the fresh flowers to inhale their fragrance.

“I found her much more cheerful,” said Romero. “A better color, less melancholy, a little disposed to talk, a certain interest in things—reviving in short; the poor child is reviving by slow degrees.”

“So it seems to me,” said Don Buenaventura with an interest that proved the importance he attached to his niece’s progress. “God may perhaps have compassion on her, and on all of us.”

“See what a beautiful nosegay she has given me,” said the curé putting it close to Don Juan’s sharp little nose, which sniffed at it obsequiously.

“It is for the procession, for the historical image of the Lantiguas. I will place it in the saddle-bag of the ass’s foal.”

“Don Buenaventura is ready to give the processions the lustre of his presence,” said the magistrate rising.

“We will pass this way. The Señorita has promised to appear on the balcony,” cried Don Silvestre delighted.

“I told her I must cease to be her friend if she does not attend high-mass to-morrow, and the beautiful ceremonies of Palm Sunday. The poor child did not wish it, but at last—”

“She shall go, I pledge myself that she shall go,” said Don Buenaventura as he took leave of his friends. “This state of things must come to an end.”

When they were in the garden Amarillo looked up, raising his head with the air of a man wearing a visible aureole of authority, and screening his eyes with his hand, that the brilliancy of the sun might not hurt them, he contemplated the garden-front of the house, saying to himself with a sense of profound and inscrutable acuteness:

“It will cost as much again in repairs—but never mind if it is only mine at last—only mine!”

CHAPTER IV.

THE HANDMAIDS OF THE LORD.

THE chapel dedicated to the Holy Saviour, and belonging to the Lantiguas, was in the right aisle of the Abbey church, and had a gothic window looking on to the porch. The seats were heavy black oak benches, and on the walls were a few inscriptions and a picture of the Judgment, in which the bare bodies of the sinners were depicted among scarlet fires. A little door with a flattened arch opened into the sacristy or vestry, a dingy little vaulted room, dark and damp, where nothing ever took place worthy to be related, unless it was the devastating ravages of the wood-worm, that invisible monster which seems like a living emblem of its brother-monster, Time.

But, on this particular Saturday, the neglected little room was lively with the busy clack of women's tongues—though it was more like the discordant chatter of magpies than the piping of linnets—making it as noisy as a milliner's work-room; a hubbub, interrupted by laughter and exclamations, and mingled with harsh coughs and

loud sneezes, which revealed that the talkers were by no means youthful. In the middle of the vestry, and already placed on the gilt pedestal and props intended to support it, stood the statue of the Saviour; a figure in wood, with a beautiful head that must have been the work of a master-hand at the most brilliant period of art in Spain. It was full of expression; the dark eyes had a look of sweet, but absorbed solemnity, and the lips seemed parted to speak.—They were speaking, but a little more and you would have expected to hear a voice, unlike that of any merely human being. The majestic brow, to which the drooping locks of hair gave a narrow, triangular outline, was as fine as anything left us by the Greek sculptors, and supreme above all the other perfections of this ideal face was the radiant look of perfect intelligence, which at once inspired the beholder with amazement and reverence. The omniscient eye which sees everything, and can pierce the most secret recesses of the heart, could not be more marvellously or more adequately rendered.

The rest of the figure did not correspond with this fine head. The sculptor had executed the bust and the extremities, and had left the body and limbs to the carpenter. The sacred person

was a clumsy wooden image, which time and damp had vied with each other in destroying; but as it was to be covered with a robe of rich material, the artistic result would not be injured; the Saviour was represented as riding on the ass which the disciples had fetched from the village near Bethphagé, and it must be confessed that no skilled hand had wrought either this or the foal that followed it. Both were of coarse workmanship; still, even so, they adequately performed their parts, and the ass more particularly was the delight of all the devout flock, and especially of the children, who looked upon it as a sort of sacred toy.

The Saviour was as yet unclothed, and the foal not yet saddled; three women were working with indefatigable vigor. One, seated astride on the trestles, was washing the face of the sacred image with a sponge; the second was stitching at a rich material, piecing it together and running on trimming; the third was twining artificial flowers into graceful nosegays and fanciful festoons. If the six hands were busy, not less so were the three tongues. It was Teresita la Monja, wife of Don Juan Amarillo, who was washing the statue. As a rich and idle woman, since she had more money than children and a greater taste for religious

exercises than for domestic occupations, she had always displayed an extravagant devotion to all church matters, and was always ready to assist in the sacristy and meddle in the vestry ; now robing the saints, and now managing sisterhoods ; loving to know and to discuss everything that had happened or was going to happen between the choir and the high altar, and to give her opinion on all that related to religious ceremonies, though she did not, and could not, understand their liturgical bearing or significance.

The second of the busy ladies was her sister-in-law, being the unlucky wife of a man who was in the worst odor in Ficóbriga and regarded as a lost soul, that infatuated philosopher and atheist, Don Bartolomé Barrabás, brother of Teresita la Monja ; but Isidorita la del Rebenque—so called because her father had been owner of the fields at Rebenque—endured the ordeal of being married to this ogre with the greatest patience, and by her needlework and exemplary conduct gained as much in the opinion and good graces of the neighbors, as her husband lost by his reprobate perversity. She was equally skilled in making garments for men, women or ecclesiastics ; and her overcoats could have competed with those of a Madrid maker, as was proved by the elegant and gallant figure cut

by Don Juan Amarillo; in the summer season she also received lodgers and treated them well. She had been pretty, but now obesity and hard work had spoiled her appearance. Ties of connection and cordial regard bound her to Teresita, from whom she often received kindness, and she was constantly with her, both at church and at home, being her perfect echo as to opinions, and a delightful inquisitive listener, with whom Teresita—the mother-confessor—could satisfy her pressing need of reporting all the secrets of the town. Their companion, who was twisting up the artificial flowers, was the youngest of the three, and on the whole, the best-looking, for her face was not without a certain rather masculine and insolent beauty. She was commonly called the “Gobernadora de las armas,” her husband having been an armorer, or in old Spanish parlance a “gobernador,” (governor) of arms. She herself was a florist and brace-maker, and in these capacities stood on the list of those who paid a tax on their income as producers; whoever doubts it may on that roll see the catalogue of the good lady’s numerous avocations. She had been left a widow by the sudden death of the armorer; however, she maintained herself very comfortably, though it cannot be asserted

that it was solely by the exercise of these two important trades.

I must not forget to add that Teresita la Monja was thin, and had a singularly shining face, her skin being so nearly like burnished copper, that the spiteful tongues of Ficóbriga said of her that she rubbed herself for a long time every morning with polishing paste to keep it bright. Her profile was classical and regular, but the lines and angles lacked sharpness, like a coin which has been worn down by use. Her grey eyes with tawny lights in them, like those of a cat, were never for an instant at rest, and the one gift she envied an omniscient Creator, was that of seeing what is invisible and reading her neighbors' hearts. She went by the name of la Monja (the nun), because the suppression of a convent of Clarisas (nuns of St. Clara), had found her still but a novice; this caused a revulsion in her destiny; her religious aspirations had cooled at the sight of the personal charms of Don Juan Amarillo—now some years since—she fell into his arms, nay, rumor even dared to suspect her virtue. However, marriage set everything right; but the line of Amarillo was not perpetuated. In fact, she had stamped in her face and manner, that mysterious something which proclaims a woman to be childless.

CHAPTER V.

BATHOS.

SHE gently bathed the sublime head which represented the incarnate Son, squeezing the sponge out over the basin to get rid of the dirty water, and as she did so, she exclaimed :

“ Goodness me ! what a state you are in.— Only see ! Well, no wonder, after lying fourteen years rotting in this hole. It is all very fine for the Lantiguas to talk.—So much show of devotion, and this sacred image thrown aside and forgotten !—Oh ! this is dreadful ; half the paint has come off on the cloth.”

“ You are a second Veronica,” said Isidorita la del Rebenque smiling. “ A little more and you will have the whole divine image on the linen.”

“ Indeed it is so ; I must not rub it any more,” said Teresita, holding up the damp cloth with pale stains on it.—“ Well, it will do now. Presently I will wipe it with a dry cloth. Even so, old and rubbed as it is, there is not another face in the world like it. Look at the expression—it is just as if it could see us, and was going to speak.”

“It looks as if it thanked us for the pains we are taking,” said the florist raising her eyes from her work and fixing them on the image. “But, oh! my dear friends do you know what has just struck me?—Do you know that really—”

“What?”

“It is like—yes, it certainly is like—”

“Hush! do not say it, for God’s sake!” cried Teresita who was coming down the steps, holding her skirts, so that the wooden donkey which was still on the ground, should not see her feet. “Say no more for Heavens’ sake. It is true that it is like—but such a thing ought not to be said, or even thought. It is a sacrilege.”

“Everything, even evil things are the work of God,” said Isidorita. “Though there are people who say that handsome faces are the work of the devil. But we had better not talk of such things.”

“Now for the shirt,” said Teresita holding out her hand for a pillowcase-shaped affair of very fine linen, which Isidorita handed to her. “I do not think, that even at the time of the Lantiguas’ greatest prosperity, this image ever wore such a beautiful shirt as this; it is what was left from a piece I bought last year to make shirts for my husband.—But look here, Isidora, how shall we get it on? Hold it on that side.—How can we get

the arms in without breaking them? Take care of the lace; it is off that old mantle I have laid aside."

"Shall I help?" asked their companion.

"No, child—finish those flowers; we shall do this very well in a minute or two."

And so they did, and then proceeded to discuss the tunic of plum-colored velvet, which Isidora had just finished mending.

"Well! I may say," exclaimed Teresita, "that if I had known that there was to be a procession this year, I would have treated the Saviour to a new tunic. My nieces and I would have done the thing in a moment. This is not fit to be seen. Serafinita must excuse my saying so, but this is a mere rag.—What trimming! What a lining! And yet you have done wonders to it Isidora. Really such indifference is disgraceful. Ah! that is just like those Lantiguas—a great deal of devout profession, plenty of talk about sacred things, plenty of preaching and praying—but, as for gifts or good works!—I judge by works, and works alone.—Well, bring the tunic; I will go up the steps; lift up the arms as much as you can."

Hardly had they finished covering the sacred person, when the door of the chapel opened and revealed a sunny and smiling face, two bright little

eyes almost closed by the broad grin of the mouth, a snub-nose about as large as a hazel-nut, a straight greenish-black garment covering the wearer from his neck to his heels, with two black arms—in short, the person of Agustin Cachorro, the sacristan. We already know that the year before José Mundideo had been turned out of that office, and he had subsequently been given the place of grave-digger. His successor in the sacristy was a man who had succeeded in gaining golden opinions in other similar offices, and it must be said for him that no man could be more attentive to his duties. Honest, active, obliging, respectful and always smiling, the worthy Cachorro made himself equally acceptable to the curé and his congregation, to the shepherd and the flock.

“Well, ladies—you are hard at work here,” said he, at the door.

“Come in, come in—good Cachorro,” cried all three with one consent.

“You must wait a little minute; I have got to put the palms in the sacristy. How smart you have made the image.—No one would recognize it in that elegant cavalier. But then, with such ladies-maids!”

“Come in, Cachorro,” repeated Teresita, who was on the most familiar terms with him. “You

could not have come at a more appropriate moment. We all three want you."

"Really? But the Señor Curé scolds me for neglecting my duties."

Agustin came in, however, with the honest grin that was his habitual expression.

"Come and help us to place the ass on its stand,"

Cachorro carefully took up the wooden image, which was no light weight.

"Mercy on us!" he exclaimed as he lifted it into its place. "It is as heavy as sin."

The ass had on its feet four pegs which fitted into corresponding holes in the board on which it was mounted, on the off-side of the she-ass on which the Saviour was to ride.

"There it is!" said the sacristan, as he settled the ass in its place. "Good-morning, ladies."

"Why, are you going?"

"Oh! do not go."

"Ladies, I have no choice," said the little man. "I should like nothing better than to stay here all day helping you and charging the ass; but his reverence the Curé will scold me and say: 'Be off, hypocrite, you are of no use but to play and idle with other hypocrites!—'"

“Then Don Silvestre is a very slanderous man!—”

“Oh! what a head mine is!” interrupted Agustin. “Where have I left the nosegay?”

“What nosegay?”

“Oh! I know. I left it in the chapel. I will fetch it.” And off he went as nimble as a rat.

“Now,” said Teresita, “we will put on the saddle-bags.”

Isidorita produced her best piece of work, which was a pair of saddle-bags for the foal, of crimson satin trimmed with braid and spangled like the jacket of a bull-fighter.

“How lovely!” cried la Monja, putting her hand in to feel the depth. Just then Cachorro reappeared, carrying a magnificent bunch of flowers.

“Here it is,” said he, presenting it with much pride. “The curé, gave it me, that the ladies might place it in one of the saddle-bags. How fine it will look!”

“What beautiful flowers!”

“It is the gift of the Señorita de Lantigua,” added the sacristan.

“The Señorita de Lantigua!” exclaimed Teresita in amazement, and withdrawing her lean parchment hands just as she was about to take

the bouquet. Isidorita was on the point of smelling at it, but she too drew back. The Doña Romualda did not stir from her seat, and Cachorro, seeing that neither of the three would touch the flowers, laid them on the table. But the merry little sacristan evidently felt a pressing need of expansion and utterance for, stretching his arms and snapping his fingers like castanets, while he gave a little leap into the air, he went on:

“Señoras, the curé is gone.—By the way, he bid me present his compliments—and he left some biscuits in the sacristy, a bottle of aniseed liqueur, and three bottles of good wine—very good wine, I can assure you. As he was leaving Don Silvestre said to me: ‘Go and ask these ladies if they will not take some refreshment; the poor things have been hard at work all day.’”

“I do not want anything,” said Teresita, absently. “I have a headache.”

“It will do it good,” Cachorro asserted, clapping his hands.

“And I am not feeling well,” added Romualda.

“Why, ladies, what is the matter?” asked Cachorro, observing the air of reserve they had all three assumed. “Do you object to placing the flowers on the saddle?” And inhaling the scent

of the summer roses in a deep breath, he made a grotesque face at them. "Ladies," he went on, "do you know that He too was the son of a Jew?—However, I am going to fetch the refreshments."

In a second he had opened the door and vanished; the three women put on an air of official severity and the most important of them, Doña Teresita, expressed the feelings of the trio when she said:

"These flowers must not be placed in the saddle-bag."

"They certainly must not."

"That is perfectly clear, as she is living in mortal sin."

"It would be an outrage, a sacrilege."

Cachorro now reëntered the room with a large tray loaded with cakes, biscuits and bottles.

"*Corpus et sanguinem*," he exclaimed as he opened the door and came in carrying the tray on a level with his shoulder, with all the skill of a professional waiter. "Here we have cheer that might raise a Lazarus. — But you still seem perplexed. Are the Jewish flowers to be used or not?"

"In my opinion they ought not to be used," said Teresita, glancing at her friends.

“Well—shall we hold an ecumenical council to decide?”

“My opinion,” said Romualda, “is that they should be used since the curé has ordered it. Our first duty is obedience.”

“That is true.”

“Yes, you are right.”

“Very well, put them in,” said la Monja, turning away with supreme contempt, while Cachorro put the splendid nosegay on one side, balancing it with a bunch of millet which had been prepared for the purpose.

The ladies had finished their task, excepting that the artificial flowers were not placed in the rings of the platform on which the whole carved image stood, though they were ready arranged in bouquets by the skilful hands of Romualda. Tired with their labors, they had seated themselves in three chairs which the sacristan had arranged for them, and contemplated the result in silence; on two of the countenances were legible signs of the satisfaction and delight of the triumphant artist, while the Señora Amarillo sat with a frown on her sallow brow, and was evidently occupied with other thoughts.

“Well, at any rate she never stirs out of the house,” she said suddenly, as if she were

answering a question, though no one had asked one.

“Who?”

“Gloria.”

“She is very right—she is too much ashamed of herself,” said Isidorita.

“Airs and affectation! Is she ashamed to come to church? Is she not yet convinced that no one will marry her? What! does she think that in Ficóbriga she will be able to retain the affection which the Lantiguas have always enjoyed? Does she fancy she can preserve the respect paid to her father, Don Juan, whom she killed by her misconduct?—Granting that the child keeps up her pride, she had better take care how she opens the question as to whether she is the most important person in Ficóbriga—”

“And she never goes out?”

“Not even into the garden. She gets up at six, takes chocolate, does her hair—I can see it all from my window. Then she reads in two or three books, does some needlework—goes to her father’s library, comes back again; she goes to bed early—they bring her up all her meals, and she hardly talks at all. And then what a state the house is in! It is quite lamentable. However, Juan assures

me it will become ours, and really the poor fellow deserves it."

Meanwhile the sacristan had begun pouring out the wine.

"Come, Señora Doña Isidora, tell me how much—" he said, tilting the bottle over a wine-glass.

"A drop, not more than quite a little drop. Stop, man, stop! I only take it to see if it will do me good."

Isidorita sipped the excellent liquor. Romualda turned up her nose at the aniseed, but not at a delicate nectar which the worthy sacristan had in another bottle, and that it might prove the more comforting, she eat some biscuits as an accompaniment.

"This is what I call living—" mumbled Cachorro, tasting one thing and another.

Teresita tasted nothing.

"Come, let us place the flowers," she said, putting an end to the pause for rest. "We still have something to do. — If I had not sent for flowers all the way to S——. Dear me! What a neglected state the Lantiguas keep this place in!"

"Mercy! what is this? What is the matter with me?" murmured the armorer's widow, pass-

ing her hand over her eyes. "My head seems turning round."

"And mine too," said Isidorita, fanning herself. "Master Agustin has given us some drugged liquor—"

"Do not be alarmed, ladies; this is what we call Anacreontic inspiration, as Don Bartolomé Barrabas says: 'When it is not a vice it is not a sin.'"

"Get away with you, you sot! Do you suppose that we are like you?"

At this instant they heard a crack as of wood splitting; the saddle-bags had fallen from the foal's back, and the nosegay and bunch of corn were both lying on the ground.

Teresita and Isidora looked at each other in consternation.

"The peg has fallen out that ought to hold the saddle-bags," said the sacristan examining the image. "It is perfectly simple; the wood is half rotten and dropping to pieces. I say as Teresita says: The Lantiguas neglect the Saviour's asses shamefully."

"Still I do not understand how the bags could fall down," said la Monja cautiously approaching the image. The sacristan picked up the bunch of flowers.

“No, so long as I have any voice in this matter,” said the Señora de Amarillo, with much solemnity, “these flowers shall not again be placed on the poor beast’s back. There is something in this, my friends, something more than meets the eye, that is above our comprehension.”

“I saw the foal kick and jerk the bags,” said Romualda. “Yes indeed, Señoras, I saw him.”

“Good God! what is the woman saying?” cried Teresita in terror. “I did not see it kick; still there is something in it—beyond doubt there is something in it.”

“He has no doubt on the subject,” said Cachorro with comical gravity, as he pulled the donkey’s ear. “There is something in it. This young ass is full of tricks.”

“Brother Cachorro,” said Teresita. “Do me the favor to take up that nosegay and place it on a chair. I would not touch it for worlds.”

“Nor I.”

“Nor I either.”

The sacristan went away carrying the bottles, and presently returning without them, he said:

“Here is Doña Serafina. She is coming to see how you are getting on.”

“Just at the right moment! Where is she?”

“In the chapel, saying her prayers.”

“I will go and speak to her. Do you go on placing the artificial flowers,” said la Monja. But her two friends found some difficulty in standing steady.

In the chapel, on her knees and devoutly prostrate before the altar, near which rested her illustrious ancestors, she found Doña Serafina de Lantigua who, however, did not perceive the approach of Doña Teresita, who came slowly out of the little low-arched door and went up to her by degrees, gliding rather than walking. When she spoke the first word of greeting in the good lady’s hearing, Serafina started with a little cry.

“Oh! Señora,” she said. “How you frightened me.”

“My dearest friend—” said Teresita holding out her hand.

CHAPTER VI.

PALM-SUNDAY.

ON that Sunday morning Don Buenaventura said to his sister :

“I have convinced her that she ought to come

with me to-day to the sacred ceremony of the Palms."

"It is a terrible effort for the poor child!" said Serafinita. "But if you are bringing her she must get ready quickly. I will go on as I wish to pray," and taking her black stick she set out.

Don Buenaventura had to wait some little time; his discussion with Gloria had ended by her saying:

"Very well, uncle, I will go that you may not say I will not do as you wish. I hate to go out, but for the same reason only, I will go out."

And presently she went out of her father's house accompanied by her uncle, after many weeks of voluntary seclusion. She was dressed in the deepest mourning, which made her pallor more conspicuous. The storms she had passed through all those months ago, and the troubles she had undergone since, had left deep and sorrowful traces on her countenance, formerly so sweet and bright; and indeed, they had been enough to spoil the most perfect beauty. Still, Gloria's face was altered rather than marred, it had acquired a maturer sweetness and a pathetic look of puzzled timidity, which appealed to the pity of those who looked at her without adverse prejudice. She had grown much thinner, and this had added to the expressive

eloquence of her eyes. They seemed to gaze with strange timidity even at inanimate objects; and if formerly everything that was characteristic of her person, or that borrowed even a transient charm from her use of it, had seemed synonymous with grace, love and hope, now everything about her claimed compassion. It was impossible to see her, and not feel deeply interested.

Long before the uncle and niece reached the Abbey, the news had flown round Ficóbriga, "Señorita Gloria has come out." To the farthest end of the town female voices were muttering or whispering, "she has come out." The boys who stood about the church door, in honor of its being a high-day, stared at her—some with scowls, some with pity, all with impertinent and vulgar curiosity; she walked past them with her eyes down, taking her uncle's arm. When she got inside the church, she felt intensely weary with the effort, but her spirit experienced a certain exaltation and calm elevation, and for a short time her soul was uplifted by religious enthusiasm.

"Go into our own chapel and sit down, you will be tired," said Don Buenaventura offering her holy-water.

At this instant the grand ceremony was being performed of blessing the palms, and the choir

sang out: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" The words fell on the child's ear like a trumpet call, and she felt overwhelmed in the presence of an infinite and invisible Majesty. She leaned against the font of holy-water and could not stir a step; Don Buena-ventura took her hand.

"Come," he said. "If you like, we will go up to the high altar and see the image of the Saviour, which is ready mounted on its platform to be carried out this evening."

"No, no—I do not want to see it," cried Gloria with sudden terror, and her head drooped on her breast.

Don Buena-ventura felt that the little hand he had taken was cold and trembling.

"What is the matter?" he said. "Are you ill? Sit down. It has been too great an effort for you. I am going to sit on one of the centre seats; you had better go into the chapel."

The priest had begun to chant the dramatic narrative of the Exodus: "And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water and three-score and ten palm-trees, and they encamped there by the waters." The sublime chapter which follows contains the story of the murmuring of the

Israelites against Moses for having brought them into the Desert after crossing the Red Sea, and of the scarcity of food they suffered from, when they heard the voice of the Lord saying: "Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you."

Gloria knew the passage perfectly well, and was familiar with all the ceremonies proper to this solemn day. She knew that the Exodus from Egypt prefigured the redemption, and that manna was the type of grace, and pondering in her mind on these sacred mysteries, she succeeded in deriving some joy from the contemplation.

"Yes, I will go to the chapel," she said, and for a time they separated. Don Buenaventura went to the central seats occupied by persons of authority and dignity, while Gloria retired to the chapel. Here she found a number of women. Gloria expected to find her aunt; but Doña Serafina had gone to another chapel. The girl, however, went in without looking at the worshippers who, either kneeling or seated, were devoutly following the service.

If Gloria had paid more attention to what was going on around her, instead of to her own reflections, she would have seen that as she entered she became the centre of the most impertinent observation, and that of all the women present one

especially distinguished herself by her insolent scrutiny of the orphaned girl's appearance and dress. And then arose a smothered hum of whispers and muttered comments which, beginning in a remote corner, ere long spread and agitated the whole congregation of black-cloaks. Heads were put together, busy tongues were eager to be heard; the whole flock was astir, and at last the rustle of starched skirts announced the rising of one and another of the congregation, too much distressed and disturbed to pursue her devotions.

Gloria never raised her eyes from her prayer-book; if she had she would have seen Teresita la Monja and her three nieces, the daughters of the notary Don Gil Barrabás. But, though she had not observed their presence, she presently became aware from the bustle that the Señora de Amarillo had risen, and signing to her nieces to follow her had, with them, marched out of the chapel. Gloria, distracted for a minute by their obtrusive disappearance, returned to her pious studies; but not two minutes later another matron, followed by her two daughters, also rose and left the chapel. This was Doña Romualda.

"They avoid me," thought Gloria to herself.

Not long after two other ladies and a man

quitted the chapel—it was as if they thought it plague-stricken; two old women and a veteran sailor alone remained, who, with their thoughts wholly absorbed in their devotions, paid no heed to anything else. Gloria felt as if she were being crushed, and she longed to cry, but she could not; at last, however, when she heard the words of the prayer: “O God, thou hast sent thy Son, in fashion as a man and humble among men,” the tears found their way and flowed in a torrent.

The palms were blessed; they were sprinkled with holy-water and fumigated with incense, and as soon as they were distributed the procession began, while the choir intoned the passage from St. Matthew: “*Cum appropinquaret Dominus.*” Gloria kept her eyes closed, praying with fervent concentration, while the priests first and then the lay-members marched past. She did not want to see anything nor to look at the shrine in which stood the figure of the Saviour and the ass, which was the interesting centre of general attention and of the most fervent adoration on the part of the children. She heard the slow steps, the solemn chant, the suppressed emotion of the agitated worshippers and smelt the hot fumes of the incense, and by subduing her whole powers of imagination and thought to the religious purport of these grand

and touching symbols, she succeeded in vividly realizing their sublime significance.

And, in truth, nothing is more beautiful than the ceremonials by which the Church commemorates the solemn mysteries of Holy-week. Even if from any other point of view they were unworthy of the enthusiasm of the Christian, they would still hold their place from their mere æsthetic value. Their solemn simplicity may well captivate the imagination of the most incredulous, and when once they are thoroughly understood, when their pathetic symbolism has been fully taken in, it must seem an indecorum—to say the least of it—to mock at them; a reflection by the way, intended for those who go to church as they go to the play. And, in fact, these constitute a no small portion of the most catholic Catholics, after a fashion of their own; whose creed is mere lip-service, whose judgment moves in a groove, while their heart is cold and vacant.

It is a self-evident fact that the ceremonies of Holy-week arouse but little enthusiasm in Spain, and many, who would be very indignant if any doubt were raised as to their orthodoxy, regard them as a mere entertainment got up for the benefit of old women, children and sextons. It is only on Holy Thursday, when the full congregations of

handsome and elegant women turn the churches into gay gardens of human flowers, that the male portion of the higher, and in their own opinion, the best class of all, are attracted thither. But society declares itself innocent of this degeneracy, and attributes it solely to reaction after the extravagant zeal and sanctimoniousness of the last generation, which, through its subjection to the clergy and their reciprocal subserviency stripped all religious ceremonies of their sublimity and pathos.

And how? By multiplying them beyond reason and making them theatrically elaborate, by the abuse of images in vestments, of processions, stations and pilgrimages more or less irreverent or senseless—nay, sacrilegious and ridiculous; by the introduction of practices which add nothing to the beautiful imagery of the sacred symbols, and by that loss of serious edification which naturally results from admitting the laity, however devout, to take part in sacred worship. It is not easy to decide who has been responsible for all this; but it is impossible to ignore the strange fact that in the Catholic country *par excellence*, four-fifths of the church-going population refuse to take any part in this “carnival of hypocrites,” as it is called by many who habitually attend mass and even

confess and communicate, though, it may be, merely that they may not be thought to be demagogues.

CHAPTER VII.

AUNT AND NIECE.

AFTER the procession of the palms and the beautiful ceremony of chanting the Hosanna in the doorway as it passed out, the mass of the Passion was celebrated. It was not over till late, and Don Buenaventura sought his niece to conduct her home where dinner was waiting for them. Doña Serafina fasted and would not join them at the meal; with no support but some chocolate she remained in the church until nightfall, when she came in and took some supper.

In the afternoon Don Buenaventura again escorted Gloria to the Abbey, to see the procession of the Entry into Jerusalem set out. He left her in the chapel, and the same scene took place as in the morning, but the girl's brave spirit did not for an instant quail. When the procession formed and started, Gloria again closed her eyes not to see it. It passed her, and they all went out—the

priests, the infirm clergy, the gentlemen, the mob—no one was left in the Abbey but a few old and infirm persons, two cripples, while the clouds of incense hung floating with an imperceptible movement through the still air. Gloria, left almost alone, found it easier to raise her mind, to lift up her soul to God, and the misery that had oppressed her bosom seemed somewhat alleviated. Her physical fatigue from having remained so long on her knees, was however intense, so she rose and was about to seat herself on a bench, when hearing footsteps with the accompaniment of the regular tap of a stick, she recognized the approach of her aunt. Serafinita came into the chapel.

“Here I am at last!” she exclaimed. “Poor dear child—my brother is so obstinate and provoking! You must forgive him, for he meant well.”

“Forgive him? On the contrary, I thank him for having made me come out. I am quite well.”

“You are quite well?” said Serafina compassionately. “And happy?”

“Happy—no; but calm and at ease.”

“And I was coming to comfort you, to console you—”

“To console me! What for?”

“Let us go into the vestry here. I want to speak to you, and there we shall rest better.”

They went; on a chair, neglected, battered, faded and full of dust, Gloria saw the bunch of flowers that she had entrusted to Don Silvestre for the purpose we know of.

“This—here—!” she exclaimed in astonishment and fixing her eyes on her aunt’s face.

“Yes—there it is,” said Serafina sinking into a chair. “You might have understood that it could be nowhere else. I would not say anything to you yesterday, but I could not help thinking you might spare yourself the pains of making this offering of flowers to the figure of the Saviour, which is the tutelary image of our family.”

Amazed and distressed, Gloria could find no words in which to reply; she looked first at her aunt and then at the flowers, as if she might more reasonably hope for an account of the matter from the flowers than from the good lady.

“It is true,” she said at last with a gasp. “I should not have sent them.”

“Those worthy ladies,” continued her aunt, “have certain scruples which I can excuse.—They regard you as living in deadly sin—and you see, we must respect a general opinion. Still I, of course, quite understand that there is a certain amount of injustice in this report of your disgrace,

and, since yesterday, no small degree of religious ideas and superstitious prejudice.”

“How? religious ideas!” asked Gloria.

“They say that as soon as the ass’s colt felt the weight of your flowers on his back, he began to kick and shake himself until he threw them off.—It is, of course, some hallucination—or some delusion of the senses. Still, be that as it may, and even quite irrespective of the supernatural phenomenon, the horrible idea still remains—”

“That I am living in mortal sin! Of what am I accused?” exclaimed the girl. “Oh my dear, good aunt, are you certain you are not mistaken?”

“I do not believe that your conscience is in so wretched a state as they suppose; still, the opinion of the people among whom we live, and who have always shown us so much kindness, is highly unfavorable to you.”

“That I discovered.”

“If you had not come out to-day as I wished,” said the poor woman, sobbing with the real sorrow that she felt, “neither you nor I should have gone through this bitter experience, and the cruel insults of which you have been the object.”

“That is true, quite true. Several persons quitted the chapel when I entered it,” said Gloria in a low voice.

“Oh!” groaned Doña Serafina, covering her usually placid face with her hands, and weeping bitterly. “I have gone through many troubles, but never have I had occasion to blush as I have this day—to see—” but tears choked her utterance. “To see,” she presently went on—“that in this town, in this sacred building, in our own chapel, such a scene could take place. How could I ever have thought that the appearance of my niece, my brother’s child—the daughter of a man who was so deservedly loved by each and all—who, by his virtues and talents, added lustre to the name of Lantigua—how could I dream that at your appearance—a woman of my own blood and name—in this chapel, the congregation of worshippers would rise and disperse out of horror of your presence?”

Gloria made no reply. She sat with her hands folded in her lap, and her head sunk on her breast, listening to her aunt’s pitiful lament, quite resolved to drink this cup too without protest or complaint.

“I can bear it with patience,” continued Serafina taking Gloria’s hands and pressing them affec-

tionately. "I can bear it with patience, and what is more, my child, I can acknowledge that they are in the right." At these words Gloria started slightly; her lips parted as if to utter words burning to be said—but she said nothing and her head dropped again.

"Yes," her aunt went on. "Yes—they are in the right. The great love I bear you, does not blind me, my dear; I see only too clearly your wretched state of mind, and I can well excuse those who remove their innocent children from your presence. If you will do what I implore you every hour to do—if you will follow my advice, which is that of a disinterested mother, if you will submit to the views of your deceased father, and of your saintly uncle—then, dearest Gloria, how different would your position be with regard both to God and man. The circumstances of your sin require that you should give up everything, that you should die to the world and to social life—to everything, absolutely everything, and live solely to God. Gloria my child!" she went on raising her voice with an accent of warning, that was little less than terrible. "Gloria, die—die to the world if you hope to save your soul."

"I am dead," Gloria murmured with a faint groan.

“No—for you still have some hope in the things of earth.”

“I hope for nothing,” answered the girl. “I accept the hideous expiation that has been laid upon me—accept it humbly, with no thought of rebellion. I forgive those who injure me; I feel neither hatred nor resentment towards those who have made my name a by-word for scandal. I will not say a syllable in my own defence, because I deserve it all, because my sins are great. I will drink to the bottom, to the bitterest dregs of this cup, and offer to God my wounded heart, which sheds tears of blood and can never again, so long as I live, give a single throb that is not a pain.”

“You are suffering, yes, I know,” said her aunt tenderly. “But that is not sufficient. In your self-martyrdom and in that expiation of which you speak, there is an independence, a vein of rebellion which is a renewal of sin.”

“What must I do not to be rebellious? I am ready to do anything,” said Gloria, abandoning, as it were, the last remaining atom of her free-will.

“Reconcile yourself entirely to God.”

“And am I not reconciled to God?”

“Believe all you are taught by our Holy Mother Church.”

“ Well, I do.”

“ And then—then go into a convent.”

At these words Gloria looked up; she felt as though a sudden and indomitable insurrection had broken out in her soul; a revolt of feeling too strong for her to control. Beyond a doubt she was on the point of saying something vigorous and final, for her black eyes flashed and her lips were pale; but her strong will—the stronger for opposition—fell like the door of a sepulchre on the revolutionary utterance, and in a moment her spirit was subdued to patience.

“ If a convent,” she said in a hollow voice, “ is a sepulchre in which the living are buried, all I ask is to live only for God and my remorse—to live in the obscurest, the completest solitude that can be imagined—to let my name be forgotten by all, even by those who pronounce it only to insult me—that every trace of my existence may seem like a record written in water.”

“ Ah!” exclaimed Doña Serafina, not without emotion, “ this is mere treacherous and worldly sophistry. No, no—a convent which the soul thus builds for itself is easily escaped from. No, and again no. This does not guarantee your perpetual seclusion, and this guarantee is indispensable, alike to the Church and to your rela-

tives ; our faith demands it and all social decorum. Ah ! my poor, dear child, think it well over ; the issue I propose to you has, from the very first, offered the only possible solution."

"The solution is endurance," said Gloria firmly.

"No — do not deny it ; you have some hope, some expectation — do not deny it."

"I hope in God."

"No — you hope for something vain and earthly—for something in this world. Without suspecting it yourself, you are still haunted by the sin which has already dragged you into the gulf. You cannot free yourself from that serpent ; confess it, admit it."

"I hope for nothing in this world," said Gloria quietly.

"Yes, you do, you must. The horrible dragon has you still in his clutches. Gloria, my daughter, tell me : Does not the Christian ideal of social death, which is salvation to the soul, in your mind include the death of every impure passion at the moment when the eternal and glorious new life begins ?"

"But it is impossible to be more dead to the world than I am."

"Unhappy girl, you indulge in dreams of a reinstatement which is impossible."

“Nay, there is no reinstatement open to me.”

“So long as that man lives and breathes in this world you will not find courage to cut yourself off from it. You cling to it with both hands, and even though it burns you, you will not let go.”

“I am cut off from the world; I have given up all notion of reinstatement, of marriage, even of love. I will tear out of my heart even the remembrance of that time, to become all, and nothing but, that which I desire to be.”

“And yet do you know what might yet happen? That man has again urged you, has sought you —”

“I do not wish either to see him or to write to him.”

“That is not enough. Your position is equivocal and compromising — a reproach to yourself and your family! Oh! Gloria, child of my heart, go into a convent, I entreat you go; it is the natural solution and remedy for your irreparable misfortune — both religious and social.” And clasping her tenderly in her arms Serafinita kissed her niece on the forehead; but the hapless penitent, between her choking sobs, repeated with unwavering determination:

“Never, never — my dear, good aunt, never will I enter a convent.”

“Tell me your reason — at any rate give me a reason,” urged Serafina.

“I have — so many times. It is the only remnant in my soul of the self-will I have cast out; all that remains of myself after the utter sacrifice I have made of every wish and instinct, the one surviving desire of my heart that hopes for nothing in this world, the one single token by which my existence now deserves to be called life.”

“It is all part of the same self-deception; you look or hope for something—” repeated Serafina shaking her head. “This is hope—simply worldly hope.”

“I fancied it was the virtue of sacrifice.”

“Always the same idea,” the old lady went on shaking her head distressfully, as if she had lost something she had hoped to save. “Always the same tie that binds you to life and that captivates your fancy, because in its origin it is noble and generous. You ought not to allow yourself to be misled by sentiments which ill beseem you, my child; sentiments which, after sinning so deeply, you have no right to entertain.”

“If so,” exclaimed Gloria yielding, but unable

to suppress the anguish of her feelings, "my punishment will be infinitely greater than my sin—and that is great enough."

"Child, you have no idea of what great suffering is. You cry over a scratch as if you had been cruelly wounded. Suffer! Do you know what the full meaning of the word is? Do you know all the capacity for suffering with which human beings are endowed? It is the one sole characteristic of man, which knows no limits and ought never to desire to find them. Only fix your thoughts on the Passion, which we this week commemorate, and your childish talk of suffering will make you smile. If you turn from your immediate trouble, to the dread of another and a greater one, it will seem a consolation by comparison. Resignation! Do you know all that it implies?—It includes the acceptance of every bitter drop that may follow that which you are drinking at this moment. You do not fully understand all this, you do not accept the whole expiation that is before you; as the self-constituted judge of your own case, your verdict has a calm and complacent independence, which allows you to hug yourself in ease. You renounce nothing but what you do not care for, but keep your hold on what ought to be the reward of none but the loftiest virtues—" Gloria moaned. "Yours

is an easy kind of resignation," Serafina went on. "A pleasant method of purification for martyrdom. If Christ, after they had scourged him, had fled when they were about to crucify him, do you think he would have redeemed the human race? But that is what you would fain do; you think you have had enough with the scourging and fly from the cross. Your renunciation will be ineffectual to save your soul if it is not complete, absolute; if it does not include everything, literally everything." And as she spoke Doña Serafinita again embraced and kissed her niece who, utterly crushed and bathed in a flood of tears, repeated her words:

"Everything, literally everything."

The perfect submission to which she had schooled herself hardly sufficed to save her from sinking into the black depths of despair. Without contradicting her aunt's terrible assertions, Gloria could not help uttering a pitiful remonstrance, which, coming as it did from the very depths of her tortured heart, formed itself into the exclamation:

"How cruel, oh! how cruel!"

"Well, do not exhaust yourself any more just now," said the good old lady affectionately. "We shall have another opportunity for discussing the subject. Let us go back into the church; I wonder

the procession is not returned by this time, but I do not hear it—it is very strange.”

It was, in fact, extraordinary—the procession, which ought to have made its round in forty minutes, had not yet got back, and more than an hour had slipped away.

“Well, do not come outside,” added Serafina.

“Compose yourself and stay a few minutes in the vestry. I will go and see what has happened to the procession.”

As Doña Serafina issued from the chapel, she was astonished to see a number of excited women hurrying into the church, and to hear voices and shouts on the plaza.

“Ah!” said she to herself trying to account for this, “it is raining and the people have dispersed.”

But no; the sun was shining gloriously, and the evening was clear and calm.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE IMAGE ON ITS WAY.

THE sun was shining brightly when the procession set out; the platform on which the sacred figure stood was borne on the shoulders of sturdy men, and the ass, on which rode the figure of the Redeemer, made its way through the crowd of uncovered heads, and the swaying grove of graceful palm branches. The noble head of the Saviour, which the inspiration of the artist had animated with a heavenly and life-like expression, was the centre of devout attention and admiration, and the holy countenance—so benevolent, so beautiful, so especially kind to Ficóbriga, seemed to smile down on her faithful children, and to say: “At last, and once more I am among you, beloved ones.” The Lord himself, as he entered into Jerusalem, hailed with hosannas and shouts of triumph, could have worn no other aspect than this, at once humanly beautiful and divinely tender; with a waving beard, eyes that looked as those only could, that had seen the creation of the world, and seen that all was good; a

delicate profile and soft flowing hair, parted on the forehead and falling over the shoulders. By the side of the ass came the foal, bearing his saddle-bags filled with provisions against all events, a detail which added to the effectiveness of his appearance under these circumstances, and gave rise to a sort of discreet joviality among the crowd without diminishing their devotion. In one of the pockets of the saddle was a plentiful allowance of golden grain, and in the other a nosegay, placed there by Teresita de Amarillo, in lieu of that which had been discarded.

The velvet mantle bordered with gold was no doubt somewhat inappropriate to the strict humility of the Saviour's entry into Jerusalem riding on an ass; however, this passed muster as an excess of piety, which when it is most fervent is wont to express its ardor by using material symbols of superior value. The sun shining on the gold braid gave the "King of Glory" something of the appearance of an Eastern potentate; still that unequalled countenance, that hand raised in warning, those bare feet, so soon to be nailed to the tree, were those of the incarnate Lord alone.

The choir were singing "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest," and distinct among the voices could be

heard that of José Mundideo who—as has been said—had lately been appointed grave-digger, on condition of his singing in the Abbey on high-days, his long practice with the choir having rendered him indispensable; and not far from him came Sildo with a censer, flinging out clouds of fragrance.

Don Silvestre wore his cope with an air of worldly elegance, and conducted the religious ceremonial with circumspect rejoicing, as a man who knows his part. Padre Poquito, as his deacon, wore the dalmatic, which, as he was a very little man, quite overpowered him, and he walked with his eyes cast down and a general expression of contrition and anguish, like a man who, being an angel of virtue, still believes himself to be a sinner. Far behind came Don Juan Amarillo, swelling with vanity; for finding himself in the full exercise of his municipal importance, he felt as if his expanding mind were inspired by something grand, almost divine. He was the representative there of human authority putting forth a tutelary arm to protect and shield the divine function, and in these circumstances it was necessary that his person should rise to the level of so important a part. He marched with a very slow and marked pace, and at every step he struck the ground sharply

with the end of his gold-tipped stick, as if to say: "Happy art thou, Ficóbriga, in being subject to me!"

At the same time, neither this self-apotheosis nor any other concomitant of his excited state of mind could make Don Juan forget the duties imposed upon him by his position on so delicate an occasion, and he consequently never gave his eyes a moment's rest from watching and noting all that might occur during the solemn and majestic progress of the procession. His head was never still for an instant; now watching the people and now craning to see if the street-boys were getting in the way of their advance. A sort of essence of authority, so to speak, seemed to exhale from his whole person—a concentrated extract of administrative zeal, and his glance may be described not so much as observing all that took place, but rather as foreseeing and anticipating it. By that glance, at once threatening and protecting, the populace of Ficóbriga were given to understand that without the permission of the municipality they could neither watch the procession nor indulge their pious enthusiasm, nor even pray, nor the ladies sob with religious sentiment, in the balconies or the street. If he could have had his own way he would have regulated the light of the

sun, as he did the place each worshipper was to occupy, and the order of the procession, and the number of blows that the constables should administer to the boys who got in the way.

As they passed close to the Casino the band of the town, consisting of six brass wind-instruments, blown by a corresponding number of human bellows, was suddenly struck with enthusiasm, so to speak, and stopping abruptly in the middle of a popular air, it broke into the Royal March, of which the notes rang out to vex the ears of the faithful. Don Juan, hearing this stately music, took it into his head that it was not in the Saviour's honor but his own that it was given out; for a moment his mind was wrapt in the illusion, and he seemed to be looking on at his own apotheosis; he saw himself floating amid rays of glory, and seemed to hear a shout of *Ave Caesar Imperator* proceeding from the deep, hoarse throats of the rusty trombones.

By his side, as thinking that position the most fitting, walked Don Buenaventura, in whose face there was no expression of a wish that the procession should continue till nightfall; he only answered in monosyllables when Amarillo said:

“It is impossible to enjoy oneself for an instant, Don Buenaventura, when one has to see

that every one else keeps his place, and that all this crowd marches in due order. I need a hundred eyes, and then I should not have enough."

Lantigua, who had a particular predilection for easy walking, and did not at all like to find his feet alternately stumbling against sharp pebbles and sinking in a puddle of mire, was mentally comparing with much acumen the eternal laws of politeness in their relation to the antediluvian state of the pavement of Ficóbriga—the worst, perhaps, that ever served for the passing of city dignitaries, priests and processions; saying to himself:

"If I ever pull out my purse again it shall be for stones and mortar, my native town!"

However, considering the ruinous state of the roadway, the procession marched in admirable order, and without hindrance from any of the crowd that composed it—men and women of the town, the country, and the sea; some true believers, others tainted with the bane of the century; astute farmers, honest and simple sailors; all the crafty and insubordinate population of the green-sloped mountains, and among them specimens of the pride of birth, of the garrulous forwardness, the cunning knavery, the hypocritical cupidity—of the attractive simplicity, the noble

pride and rough and ready generosity, so marvellously described by Pereda.* No type, no class was unrepresented, and these Biscayan communities are so easy to manage that everything went on smoothly, ruled by a word; without any born soul dreaming of transgressing, without any disorder, each walking in the place assigned to him, and in the orbit traced out by Amarillo. But, quite unexpectedly, an obstacle unhappily presented itself, and this was what disturbed the marvellous concord that until that moment had prevailed.

The procession was to turn into a street that led to one of the city gates, and follow it as far as the cemetery, thence it was to go to the left, past a spot known as the Monjas Claras, or Nunnery of St. Clara, to cross the chief square, the plaza del Consistorio, and reach the Abbey by a narrow alley. At the place which perpetuated the memory of the nuns of St. Clara, was an irregular and narrow open court, on which three or four winding and squalid lanes debouched, one of which led from this little carrefour to the high-road. The procession had reached this spot when, from the opening of one of the alleys opposite there came at the same moment a man on horseback.

* José Maria Pereda, whose works are well known in Spain.

The singers were silent, the sailors who were carrying the image stopped short, the sacristan let the crucifix he held aloft slip to rest on the ground, and the great candlesticks trembled in the hands of the acolytes that were carrying them, like trees shaken by the wind. Sildo let the censer fall, the Curé frowned, Father Poquito looked up from the ground, and on Don Juan's lips trembled the words: "To prison—off with him to prison!"

Seeing such a crowd of people, the rider tried to turn back again at any price; but the horse reared and very nearly threw its master. Happily he was evidently a first-rate rider. The people, meanwhile, broke out in shouts and threats which increased the beast's terror, and he began to dance and leap, while his open mouth foamed with the ineffectual pressure of the bit. At this moment another man, also on horseback, appeared behind the former at the entrance of the same narrow street; he was ruddy and florid, very tall—almost gigantic—and equally stout, with a pair of fists like sledge-hammers.

Don Juan, seeing two men on horseback audacious enough to ride into Ficóbriga at the sublime hour of the procession, felt his spirit rise with the magnanimous rage of the antique gods, and he flung himself into the midst of the people,

lightnings flashing from his eyes. His right hand held his staff on high as though it were a spear, he was prepared to chastise, to uphold the infinite supremacy of Authority—that sacred principle which had been entrusted to his keeping to the end that he might transmit it intact and glorious to the next generation.

“Make way for the Alcalde!” shouted the people.

The first rider’s horse touched a woman’s head with one of his forefeet. His master spurred him and he made a leap backwards, but immediately repenting of his retreat, he again got among the crowd, which surrounded him with the evident intention of mischief to both horse and rider, beginning with insults, and following these up with actions. The second horseman however, the giant, lightly dismounted, and was so ready to use his fists against each and all who raised a hand, displaying such rapidity in give and take, that a desperate fray began. And the hapless Alcalde! the man elect of society, and even of God, to set the world to rights, to calm the tumult, to punish the guilty, to convert the world into one vast cask of oil—he could not reach the scene of the conflict from the crowd of bystanders. The foremost horseman was now able to dismount, and tried to check the other

who seemed to be his servant ; but he, with a face as red as a capsicum, and pouring out some foreign words which seemed to be abuse, struck out with his arms of iron and sledge-hammer fists, which fell like hailstones on the faces, necks, shoulders, chests, and occiputs of the performers in the procession. He was a boxer in fact, on the most approved English model, but on this occasion, it was not the will of Providence that he should waste his skill on a race of weaklings ; as it happened there were among the crowd a dozen or so amphibious natives of the coast who, as soon as they saw the furious manipulation of the red-faced foreign giant, set to work to show him that fists trained at sea are not made of cotton-wool. It was now a thorough-going fight—and the Alcalde, that august person—who looked upon himself as semi-divine—who with a word, with a Homeric gesture or mere frown could annihilate every peace-breaker of them all, and turn them from lions into lambs—could not reach the scene of the catastrophe, because the people who pressed round had jammed him in their midst. So here was Don Juan borne from side to side by the swaying of the human tide, like a shipwrecked man, craning up his head, raising his right hand, while with the left he held his stick and palm-branch, since he did not

wish to lose either the sacred or the secular emblem, and shouting at the top of his voice: "Order! Send them to prison!"

The master had succeeded in pacifying some of those nearest to him by administering a few very convincing cuffs to his servant and defender; but meanwhile a candlestick was seen flying through the air and heard to fall on some hard object, and then the head of the monster boxer was seen to be streaming with blood, while he, frenzied and foaming with rage and beside himself with vengeful fury, threw himself on the bearer of one of the sacred objects carried in the procession. A tremendous ebb at once occurred; the multitude flowed back; there was that sort of creeping current which produces a calm, that tremor of the crowd when it is thunderstruck, that dispersion which chokes all the side issues, like a freshet after a storm, that collision of one wave of men with another as they shove and thrust and elbow and fight their way. At the same instant there was a loud crash of rotten and splitting wood, and the Saviour, and the ass, and the foal suddenly vanished, engulfed in the sea of hands and feet.

A picture by Goya, entitled, "A procession dispersed by rain," can alone give an adequate

notion of the scene; the crucifix was borne off down one of the side streets, taking flight without any aid from the tapers, which, for their part, were carried off safely on the shoulders of the bearers, like guns after the ranks have been dismissed. The Curé, flinging his cope across his shoulder, as if he were going to rush into the fray, shouted loudly to his deacon. In his rage and excitement Don Silvestre seemed to say: "Ah! if only I did not wear this crimson badge—" and he pawed the ground, as it were, with his angry foot, like a Djinn in the "Arabian Nights."

Padre Poquito had vanished, *sicut avis velut umbra*; the ground was strewn with trampled palm-branches. A few persons had chosen not to quit the fallen figure of the Saviour, and were trying to repair the mischief, gathering up the fragments of the smaller ass, which was almost reduced to powder, and the bunch of flowers, which had been flung some yards away with a jump like some captive creature that has regained its liberty. One choir-boy had gone off alone down a street, staring on all sides, while Sildo was amusing himself by flinging incense in the faces of those who had taken refuge in the door-ways and sheds.—And the Alcalde meanwhile—that incarnate Providence, that sublime personification of

order, that supreme intelligence on whose foresight the people were to rely—though he had at last been able to flourish his rod on the very spot of the fray, had been quite incapable of keeping the delinquents within reach of his arm or his voice, of giving public evidence of the prerogative of justice, or of setting such a dramatic and eloquent public example, before the eyes of all the world, as the unheard-of conditions required.

“But where are they? Where are they?” he asked, turning to all the four points of the compass, while his eyes spoke verdicts, fines, terms of imprisonment, perpetual chains and ignominious death. He issued such terrible orders to his subordinates as made them quake in their shoes. The chief constable would gladly have rushed off in every direction at once in search of the delinquents; but he could go only to one place at a time, although Don Juan shouted after him:

“Instantly—immediately, take them all.”

“However—as after a rout the straggling detachments of the army reunite by degrees and combine once more, so the dispersed fragments of the procession came together again and formed once more to march on to the church; so that Serafinita saw Father Poquito come in first, then a taper-bearer, presently Sildo, and then the

choristers, and so by degrees the rest, till the smashed poles and platform were brought in. Nothing had remained intact but the person of the Saviour, which was uninjured, both as to its divine countenance and its body and dress; the two animals were melancholy wrecks. But what turned Serafinita positively aghast was that the knots of people who came straggling into the Abbey with these *disjecta membra* of the procession, said again and again, in tones of dismay and wrath, "The Jew!—the Jew!"

In the course of her tragical existence, the worthy lady had gone through four moments of black and overwhelming sorrow. First, when she saw her mother die; second, when her cowardly and wretched husband had basely struck her before spectators. Third, when without any preparation she had heard of her brother Juan's death, and her niece's ignominious fall. Fourth, when in the Abbey of Ficóbriga she heard the words: "The Jew! the Jew!"

CHAPTER IX.

ACCURSED.

ALL that evening Daniel Morton was detained in the magistrate's lock-up; but at nightfall, Don Juan Amarillo in person went to set him at liberty, that he might find a lodging. At first sight this magnanimous conduct seems unaccountable, and the most rational explanation is that the zealous Alcalde was moved to qualify his severity by that profound respect which the wealth of others inspires in the avaricious mind—particularly if it is exceptionally great. Knowing—as we know—what the idol of Juan's religion was, it is easy to understand the prestige enjoyed in his eyes by a man who possessed, in the general estimation, fabulous and inexhaustible coffers of money. Among certain rich people, who regard a poor man as a kind of blood-sucker, the very richest is almost a god. Moreover, the great man of Fico-briga—in whom affectation and astuteness, vanity and stern realism were singularly blended—argued as follows :

“ This man, who is one of the foremost among

his own people, must hold a good position at Madrid. If I offend him, he will have recourse to the German Ambassador, and make a scandal in the newspapers, and it might even occur to the Minister to deprive me of my place—fearful thought! It will amply answer the requirements of public vengeance if I keep the servant, who in fact was the real delinquent, in prison for a time.”

And this he actually did. The utmost that Morton could obtain was that Don Juan promised to set him at liberty next day, when public resentment would have somewhat abated, and the principles of authority would have recovered from the indignity they had suffered.

Daniel at once directed his steps to the inn; this had at one time rejoiced in the name of “*La Equidad*,” but, since the rapid progress of modern times, and the extended fashion of sea-bathing, it had grown in importance, if not in cleanliness, till it fell into the hands of a Frenchman, who improved it greatly, arranging the service in accordance with modern ideas, and having two or three huge placards painted to decorate it, which proclaimed it to be the “*Hotel de France, tenu par Mirabeau*.” The name of the great orator could hardly have fallen to a baser use.

Morton walked in without paying any heed to

the coarse inuendoes, which greeted him at the door-way, and was going upstairs to demand a room when Mr. Mirabeau in person stopped him, saying in every language excepting Spanish:

“Sir, I beg your pardon, but I cannot give you a room. I would rather see the house vacant for the next three years.”

The stranger went out into the street again; he looked very weary and sad; but, determined to find a lodging at any cost, he asked the passers-by whether in all Ficóbriga they knew of any inn, lodging, tavern, or pothouse, besides the establishment conducted by Mr. Mirabeau. Two women recognised him, and with a shriek of terror rather than of surprise, they fled exclaiming: “The Jew! —the Jew!”

“I have plenty of money,” thought he, “and, at last I must find a roof to shelter me.”

The streets of Ficóbriga were very dark, but almost all who were still on foot in them recognised Daniel Morton. Some, seeing him approach, crossed over to the other side, others stood still to stare at him, as if he were some curious object. He heard them mutter foul invectives or silly abuse, but he could not get a satisfactory answer from any one; finally, he decided on enquiring only of children, who, as he thought, would not

be so malicious as to repel him with the horror that the mature conscience seemed to feel, nor to deceive him. But the two or three little rascals of whom he asked information, sprang with a hue and cry to respectful distance, and then picked up stones to fling at him.

Night had closed in, darkness, and solitude, and with these fatigue fell on the hapless foreigner who was suffering severely from hunger and thirst. After having gone through all the streets, in a deserted and out-of-the-way spot he met a little girl who came towards him singing. Going up to her he enquired if she knew of an inn that was not kept by M. Mirabeau. The child, either in ignorance or in humanity, pointed the way to the next street, and to a door-way where a dry bush hung over it, indicated that it was that of a tavern. Morton gave a small coin to his preserver, and going up to the house saw a small sign-board, with blue letters, announcing that here was a "*Posada*;" within he could hear the hoarse voices of sailors. He addressed himself to a man with an apron on who stood in the door-way, and asked for a lodging. The man, after narrowly taking stock of his appearance, told him to go upstairs, and they both began a perilous ascent by a rickety ladder. "Thank God!" said Morton

to himself. "Thank God, he does not know me!"

But as they entered a large sitting-room where three women were gossiping together, one of them cried out:

"There—there he is!" Horror was written on all three faces; and one, more foolish than the others, rushed to the window and shrieked with the discordant vehemence of a furious woman:

"The Jew, the Jew!" In a moment a number of the sailors who were drinking below rushed upstairs.

"Yes, I know him," said one. "It is the man we saved off the English steamer that was lost."

Men and women alike stared at him in stupid astonishment; presently some hostile feeling became evident in one of the groups; but the inn-keeper raising his voice and extending his hands, said:

"In my house no one shall come to any harm. Caballero, quit the premises."

Morton went towards the ladder, but he paused a moment and turning round said:

"Will you sell me a loaf?"

"It costs five duros!"* shrieked one of the women with a cry like a harpy.

* The duro is about a dollar.

"Ten duros!" screamed another.

The innkeeper took a loaf out of the bread-chest which stood near, and offered it to Morton, who as he took it with one hand, with the other drew out his purse.

"No," said the man stopping him.

"Why?" asked Daniel.

"It is an alms," said the innkeeper gravely.

"Charity," added a sailor. "That is our way."

"You saved my life," said Morton to one of the men, laying his hand on his breast.

"Yes—that was all in the way of business."

"Very well," said the Hebrew. "Then give me a drink of water. God will repay you." And the sailor fetched a pitcher of water. Morton, after having drunk, went out carrying the loaf.

With this precious acquisition he now felt tolerably content, as Robinson Crusoe may have felt on his desert island when he had wrung from Nature the first necessaries for sustaining life. There was by this time hardly any one in the streets, which was no small comfort to Morton, who had reached a state in which the mere approach of a human being filled him with dismay and confusion. In his solitary wandering, as soon as he heard steps he turned aside and hastily took another road, like

a thief trying to escape with his ill-gotten goods in his trembling hands. Any one meeting him might have taken him for a wretch who had just stolen the loaf he was eating.

Frugal as the meal was, the hunger he had suffered gave it a relish, and he enjoyed it more than many richer banquets he had tasted in the course of his life. Having satisfied this first need of his body—the craving which so long as it is ignored displays a certain resignation but which, if it gets some small satisfaction, imperatively demands more—he began to long for rest—for a shelter, a roof and a mattress, or even a heap of straw; and this was the most difficult matter because there was not in all Ficóbriga a door that would open to admit him. For lack of a better refuge he sought a deserted heap of ruins, a trunk of a tree, or some wall away from all human habitation which might at least protect him against the keen north-east breeze. He made a wide circuit starting from the centre of the town and returning to it again. At last, he discovered a flight of stone steps which led up to an opening in the old town rampart whence some buildings could be seen in the midst of a thick grove. There he sat down; the spot was comparatively comfortable and screened from the north. Before long two dogs came sniffing round,

and to them Morton gave what was left of the bread, a civility which they did not refuse.

"Come," thought Morton. "At any rate it cannot be said that even the dogs avoid me. That is some comfort."

Not long after an old beggar came by with a child in his arms, and held out his brown and bony hand to ask an alms.

"Do you belong to Ficóbriga?" asked Morton.

"Yes, Señor, I am a sailor of the port of Ficóbriga, but as I am so old, for two years, now I have not been to sea, and I live in the greatest misery, if you can call it living."

The old man's voice quavered, he seemed to be weak, hungry and cold. His face was tanned and furrowed with wrinkles like crumpled parchment, his beard was white, and his figure stalwart; considering the destitution under which he was shivering and the inanition that consumed him he was tolerably upright, and through the rents in his shirt, which was more ragged than a top-sail split by a storm, his hairy breast was visible, hardened by the waves that had beaten against it. In his arms, huddled in rags, the little one slept the sleep of angels, clinging with her tiny hands to the old sailor's neck, now and then murmuring a few words and stirring uneasily, not because she was

ailing but because she was dreaming, even in the very lap of misery, of fair and smiling things—perhaps that she was eating cakes, or playing with three pebbles and making believe they were dolls.

“And you are very poor?” asked Daniel.

“I have nothing but what is given me. I lived with my daughter who was married and had enough to live on, for her husband worked in the quarries; but two months ago a stone fell and killed my son-in-law. Then my daughter worked to maintain us all, but two weeks since I buried her too. She left this little girl; we have no house, we have nothing but the charity of good souls, and up to this time neither I nor my grandchild is dead of hunger, for the Lord has been merciful and has looked down upon us day by day.”

Daniel took out a gold coin, saying to himself: “Now I shall make a friend.”

He gave the money to the old man who departed after thanking him and promising to pray to the Virgin del Carmen for the soul of his benefactor. Morton watched him, and when he had gone some distance he saw him stop at the corner of the street, where there was a lamp, and examine the money by the feeble light of the municipal illumination; then he saw him stoop down to ring

the gold coin against a stone, and then the old fellow ran back to where he had left Morton.

"What is the matter—is it bad money?" asked Daniel.

"No, Señor—but you have made a mistake," said the old man holding out the money. "You have given me a centen instead of a peseta."

"And why did you suppose I meant to give you a peseta?"

"Because it is the most any one gives. I could not take it unless you meant to give it me, and it was not a mistake."

"Brother, I give it you," said Morton, much touched. "Keep the money—if I made a mistake it was in giving you only one. Take another—two more—and to-morrow we must meet again."

And he held out the pieces. But the old man had hardly taken the treasure in his hand when he drew back a step with a cry of surprise and alarm.

"What?" said Morton angrily. "Do you know me too?"

"No—oh no!" stammered the beggar. "But this money—all this money! And to give it to me so!—No, I never saw you before, but there is only one man who gives money like this—and he is the Jew!"

"I am he," said Daniel very gravely.

The old man tried to put the money back into Morton's hand; but, as he would not take it he flung it on the ground, saying in awful tones:

"Take your gold; no Christian shall ever touch the money that was the price of his Saviour's blood."

Daniel Morton was silent, he felt chilled and stunned.

"Man!" he exclaimed at last in furious accents. "You are devoid of the bowels of compassion—and you speak like a fool."

"I need no alms from you. Good-bye."

"Stop, listen!" cried Morton in anguish. "Do you not see that for this night I am poorer than you, more wretched than you? You boast of your Christianity and you have no pity on me. You spit upon me in the name of religion, and have no compassion for my desolate condition, without a friend, without a voice to speak comfort to me, without a man to call me brother or to feel himself akin to me, or even to remember that we both were made by the same God!"

The old sailor slowly shook his head, then plunging his hand into a slit in his rags, which served as a pocket, he pulled out half a loaf.

"Take it," he said coldly and with an infusion

of scorn which was sufficiently suggested by his brutal and familiar form of kindness.

Morton groaned.

“It is not bread that I want;” he said, “others less cruel than you have already bestowed that. Bread may be given even to dogs. Give me your company, your brotherhood, your intercourse, your tolerance, the comfort of hearing a human voice which is not rendered discordant by religion, by mean reproaches for a deed for which I am not responsible, and by the insults which flow from sectarian rancor. Why do you refuse to take my money? Are you afraid of me?”

“You are a horror to me!”

“But why?”

“Because you must be.—Good-bye.”

And the old man went, turning his head however every few steps to look at the man whom he associated with the thirty pieces of silver.

Morton clasped his head in his hands and sat for a long time deep in gloomy meditation. Then he started up and exclaimed in furious accents:

“Ah! Impious Nazarene—never will I be a follower of thine!—never!”

CHAPTER X.

HOSPITALITY BY HALVES.

ABOVE an hour had passed when he heard the sound of footsteps; a man was coming up the steps whom Daniel at once recognized.

“Caifás!” he exclaimed starting up.

“Señor Morton!” cried Mundideo astonished.

Morton’s face expressed the keenest delight; he took José by the arm and said with voice full of pathos:

“You know me too—but you will not repel me.”

“It would seem that you have not been able to find a lodging,” said Caifás.

“And you offer me one? How thankful I am to have met you José; you are like a heavenly apparition. I am perishing with cold. All my luggage is in the custom-house and they will not give it me till to-morrow. My servant has been put in prison.”

“Yes, I know—but that a gentleman like you should pass the night in the streets!”

“Where is your house, now?”

"Here, quite close," said Mundideo with the eager anxiety which springs from true gratitude. "But what is that shining on the ground? It looks like money—five duro pieces."

"It is some that I dropped," said Daniel. "You may take it."

Mundideo picked up the pieces and offered them to the owner.

"Keep them," said Morton. "You can give them to me afterwards. And your children?"

"They are well.—Now, come along—walk carefully for fear of stumbling."

After passing a little plot of ground shaded by two or three plane-trees of good size, Caifás opened a little door cut in an irregularly-built wall and they went into a plot of ground which seemed to be cultivated.

"Where are we?" asked Daniel, not quitting hold of Mundideo who guided him through the darkness.

"This is the great bed where we must all lie down to rest."

"The cemetery!" exclaimed the Jew, and a shudder ran through his marrow and a sense of horror which prompted him to halt.

"It is very damp," said José. "Do not stop here."

“I can see the crosses—how many crosses! And that white heap?”

“That is the monument that is being constructed for Don Juan de Lantigua.”

Morton shuddered again with cold and horror; a serpent seemed to have twined round his heart and to check his breathing.

“Don Juan!” he said in a low voice. “Is he here?”

“We are passing close by his grave,” said Mundideo, lifting off his hat. “The little boys are here too, at his right hand.”

Morton also uncovered his head.

“That large vault that is being dug,” added Mundideo, “is for the whole family.”

“For the whole family!—And do you live here? in this dismal spot?”

“Yes, Señor, I am the grave-digger. It is an ugly business, but I hope to leave it soon.—Here we are; walk in.”

They went through a little garden into a very humble abode. Caifás, after striking a light, led his friend through a narrow passage into a tolerably spacious room where there were various articles of furniture, and among them a large sofa made of woven cane. A door opened out of it

into another which served as a bedroom, and Múndidéo, pointing to it, said:

“There I sleep with my children; I will move my bed into the sitting-room where you will be much more comfortable.”

“Many thanks, but I do not need a bed. Give me a coverlet and I can rest on this sofa.—At last I have met a man—a real brother—and yet I pity you my friend. You could not have been chosen to a more odious post.”

“I am ready to give it up to any one who wishes for it,” said Múndidéo, placing a blanket and a pillow on the cane sofa. “My position now, Señor Morton, is not so precarious as when you were so good as to assist me.”

“I am truly glad to hear it. Has fortune smiled then?”

“Pretty well.”

The attitude which Caifás had taken up towards the Jew was somewhat constrained. His looks were full of the profound respect and veneration which he could not help feeling towards his benefactor; still this respect was not unmingled with a certain reserve, or even repugnance, and a hesitation in speaking that was almost alarm. It needed no soothsayer to see that poor Múndidéo was suffering much doubt,

and that his conscience found itself face to face with the greatest and most serious puzzle that could ever offer itself to him for solution.

“Well—and how has fortune mended?” said the foreigner arranging himself on the couch.

“I opened a tavern in which everything went wrong; but soon after a brother of my mother’s died at Vera Cruz—”

“And you inherited his property?”

“Well, it was but a trifle; but it was capital to me. As the money is in an English bank I could not draw it out immediately. But they say it will come next week, and then, Señor Morton—”

Caifás looked down at the ground.

“Well—then?”

“I can pay your money back.”

“What money?”

“The money you were so good as to give me when I was at Cortiguera.”

“I did not give it you to have it repaid to me.”

“But I shall repay you, because it is my duty.”

Caifás was standing before him in an attitude of subserviency, pale and with his hat off; he now laid on the table the three coins he had picked up not long before.

“What—your duty!” said Morton wrathfully.

“Yes, Señor. I—how shall I say it so as not to offend and vex you? How can I say it so that you, my benefactor, may not think me ungrateful?”

“Well, at any rate say it out at once.”

“I did not know that you—”

“Well?” said Morton turning upon him with a gesture of exceeding wrath.

“Do not be offended, Señor Don Daniel, and do not think me wicked, or that I have ceased to value your goodness—I—I do not know what has come to me, and indeed I cannot help it. When I came to know of Don Juan’s death and that you were—”

“That I am a Jew,” said Morton sternly.

“Yes,” gasped Caifás with a sob. “And your money seemed to burn my hands, Don Daniel—and the father confessor told me that I ought to pay it back again, if I earned it by licking the roads clean, or carrying stones like an ass, or tugging a plough like an ox. But happily I can repay what I ought never to have taken—”

“Silence—hold your tongue!” shouted Morton seizing Jose’s arm with a grip of iron, and turning white with fury. “Hold your tongue—fool! You are talking like an idiot, like a brute. What do

you dare to say of me? How can you judge my soul? Who are you, a miserable worm that you should dare to condemn another man to eternal damnation—a man made by God like yourself? Who are you that you should turn upon me—upon me your benefactor? Do you know that it is the conscience, the motive, that makes the man; and that ingratitude, black ingratitude is the conscience of the base?" and the stranger smiled bitterly.

"I am not ungrateful—no indeed, Señor," cried Caifás in sincere grief. "If you could only read my conscience. I do not know what has come over me. I adored you as we adore the saints on the altars—I prayed to God for your salvation more than for my own. Ask of me every thing that I possess, and to the very last stick or thread in my house, it is yours. I would take the bread out of my own mouth that you might not be hungry, and I would share my house with you, though by doing so I should be ruined and have to beg for the rest of my life."

"I ask nothing of you—not shelter, for that I could find under a tree, a shrub, a rock, a cave, a quarry; I ask nothing but the support of friendship, of human kindness, of fellow-feeling."

"So far as affection and feeling are concerned

you will always find them in me," said Mundideo much moved. "But—"

"But what?"

"I must say it," Caifás went on, almost choked with concern, "I cannot keep your money, I do not want your money."

"This is mere superstition! Your spirit is lofty and compassionate, but you give way to the base ideas of vulgar minds."

"My conscience requires me to have no dealings with you but those of human charity."

"You cannot be my friend as friendship is understood among equals, you cannot be intimate with me, nor serve me, nor be with me on those terms of community, of interest and reciprocity of feeling which exist among those who profess the same religion."

"You have expressed it exactly—that is what I wanted to say, but I did not know how."

"If it were not for gratitude you would abhor me José?"

"With all my heart!" exclaimed the gravedigger eagerly. "With all my soul. How could I love a man who has caused so many tears to be shed by the noble family I adore—who killed the father and disgraced the daughter—"

Morton felt each word like a knife with which

the man was stabbing his heart; but the attack was directed to his weak point, and he could not protect or defend himself.

"Do not judge when you do not know all the facts," he said in a hollow voice. "I had thought you would always be my friend, but I have been deceived. I felt gladdened when I saw you, for I thought that from you I might get some news of the one being I love—without whom I cannot live."

"Of Señorita Gloria."

"Do you know anything about her? Do you ever see her?" asked Morton anxiously.

"I know a good deal," said Caifás, with a malicious infusion of mysterious meaning. "And I see her frequently; but to you—to you—I can give no information."

"You will not tell me what she is doing, if she is well, if she is happy, if she goes out?"

"I can only tell you that she is most unfortunate."

"Perhaps she may soon cease to be so."

Caifás shook his head doubtfully and sighed deeply.

"You say you see her?"

"Every day."

"And you will tell me nothing?"

“Nothing,” said Mundideo dully, burying the words in his breast as he would bury the dead in a grave. “One thing, only one thing, I will say, and that is that to me she is always like an angel from Heaven—and just as much an angel since her fall as before it.”

“That is well said, and I thank you, José; you have a good heart—I have been told that popular feeling is very strong against her.”

“Yes, very. They say that she is out of God’s good graces. Yesterday a strange thing happened; the Señorita sent a bunch of flowers to be placed in one of the saddle-bags of the foal that follows the Saviour, but as soon as the beast felt the flowers on his back he began to kick, and threw them off into the dust. All who saw it were horror-stricken.”

“And you—do you mean to say that you are capable of believing so gross a superstition?”

“I neither believe nor deny it. Very strange things happen in this world. Oh! I have seen a great deal in my time.”

“And all the people here believe it?”

“As they do the gospel. It is the talk of all Ficóbriga.”

“What hideous credulity! But you cannot believe it?”

“No, Señor, no,” cried José after a short pause. “No, I do not believe it. The Señorita is an angel from Heaven; I said so and I repeat it.”

“Right, my friend, very right. And you may say and repeat another thing, which is that she will escape from her unhappy situation and be happy yet.”

“No, not that.”

“And why not?”

“Because she is a good Christian, and you—”

“Well, and I—”

“Do not make me say a thing I ought not to say to a benefactor.”

“Very well; let that pass. Let us talk only of her. Tell me all you know.”

“Oh! I know a good deal.”

“Then tell it me, tell it me all.”

But Caifás put all his fingers to his mouth and held his thick dark lips together as if they were padlocked.

“Not a word will I utter,” he said, “not a single syllable that can serve your plans.”

“My plans are all for her good.”

“That God alone can judge.”

“And cannot you? You who have had proofs of my mode of action—you who surely know me well enough?”

"I know nothing, nothing," growled Mundideo perversely. "I know nothing. You are a mystery to me Señor Morton; at once an angel and a curse, good and evil combined in one person, dew and lightning both falling from the sky—I do not know what to think or what to feel about you. I love you and I think I ought to hate you, but if I hate you I fancy I ought to love you. You come to me like a demon disguised as a saint, or an angel clothed like Lucifer—but I know nothing, nothing at all."

The two men were silent. Caifás, frowning sternly, doubly grim from his natural ugliness and the suspicious expression his face wore at the moment, gazed at Daniel from a respectful distance; he was seated with his arms folded, his head somewhat on one side, his eyes fixed and stony. Such a problem had rarely been presented to the human mind, and this rude, untutored soul saw the wide panorama of religious questions and differences unfolding before his mind's eye, disturbing and tormenting his spirit in an obscure and indefinite manner. His fancies seemed to take visible form, and in his brain he heard those agitating questions which are whispered to the trembling soul by invisible lips and which so rarely find an answer. A man of a more educated intel-

ligence would have extracted from that midnight meditation some clear result—perhaps some terrible negative—but something definite though it were the black void of atheism; but Mundideo could reach nothing tangible, neither light nor darkness; nothing but confusion, mystification and chaos—that lurid half light of the human soul when its faith is deeply rooted but reason, like an incubus called up by some magic art, comes wantoning in, to disturb and upset everything.

Their meditative silence was a long one; Morton seemed to be sleeping, but he was wide awake. The hours glided by, and the night marched on with that majestic solemnity which seems to give it a certain resemblance to a brain at work in silence and calm repose—full of mysterious sounds, of vague images, and of those forms which mingle and dissolve in the retina of eyes that though closed are awake. Very late, when it was almost day, Morton said to Caifás:

“Are you not going to bed?”

“I am not sleepy,” said the grave-digger. “I am thinking—thinking of very strange things that will not let me sleep.”

“Day seems to be dawning. I want to speak to Don Buenaventura.”

“So early?”

"Is he not an early riser?"

"Oh! he gets up with the birds."

"Then I beg you to go to him and tell him from me that I am at his service and await his pleasure."

Caifás did not stir.

"What!" cried Morton angrily. "Even in this do you refuse to oblige me?"

"In this, no," said José rising. "I will go and tell Don Buenaventura."

CHAPTER XI.

EIGHTEEN CENTURIES OF ANTIPATHY.

IT was not yet six o'clock when Don Buenaventura and Morton found themselves tête à tête in Mundideo's hut. The children had been turned out into the road to play, by their father who, after deepening somewhat the vault that had been begun the day before, proceeded to inter one of those hapless dead who are dropped into the vast mystery of subterranean decomposition—without a friend, unsung, unblest, unwept—without a wreath or even a winding-sheet. For them all is

bare realism and cold clay—they indeed are dust to dust.

The two gentlemen, after looking out for an instant at the melancholy scene, seated themselves by a little table covered with oil-cloth which stood in the middle of the room. Both were silent, finding some difficulty in beginning, and each thinking: "He may speak first." At last Don Buena-ventura opened the conversation:

"I need not enlarge," he said ponderously, "on the terrible disasters that have befallen my family. You know them well, and seeing you so ready to obey my summons, I may believe that you are not indifferent to them, if only from remorse at having been the occasion of them."

"This is the second time I have come here since that fearful day," answered Morton. "This is sufficient proof that I am not a fugitive criminal; the fact that I am ready to return so persistently to the neighborhood of those I have injured shows how ardently I desire to make amends."

"Now is the time to prove it. I have requested your presence against the wish of my family and even of Gloria. But, venturing to differ from them on this delicate question, I believe that the matter may be arranged. It is easiest to come to an understanding by word of mouth. I

am most anxious that this terrible misfortune should be remedied and—so far as I know—I fancy that it may be done if in the author of our disgrace I find the lofty purpose, the dignity and sense of honor which I am prepared to take for granted in any well-bred gentleman, whatever his creed or sect. I have made enquiries in Madrid, and from persons of your nation whom I esteem highly I have learned that I have not to deal with a hot-headed simpleton, nor with a man of corrupt habits, insensible to the noble dictates of honor.”

“I am not a reprobate in your eyes!” exclaimed the Hebrew gratefully. “I can receive no more consoling assurance after the insults to which I have been subjected since I arrived in Ficóbriga.—You do not regard me as plague stricken, as an outcast, a pariah, a wretch beyond the pale of all human and social law!—You do not hold me in horror and fly from me, or think you will be damned if you take my hand!”

“My opinion regarding you is not finally settled,” said Don Buenaventura gravely. “It must depend on your action and the disposition you may be in as to coming to an understanding with me.”

“The tolerance which you display,” answered

Daniel, "gives me every hope, and predisposes me to make every possible sacrifice."

"Sacrifice—that is the word, the very word," said Lantigua with eager satisfaction. "That is what we must discuss. My dear sir, we have before us that desperate problem: Religion—Religion, which under various aspects rules the world, its nations and families. Nothing can alter that. Generally Religion inspires us with comfort, energy and endurance, but in the present case it comes before us breathing solemn threatenings and setting up an insurmountable obstacle of disunion and disagreement—a mountain that has fallen upon us."

Don Buenaventura sighed and Daniel Morton sighed also.

"Still, perhaps we are attributing greater importance to this difficulty than it really possesses," added the Spaniard, hardly knowing how to approach the question. "For all of us who have any self-respect and who know how to attribute a true value to social duties, there is a distinct and complete code which admits of no quibbling, or subtleties, or equivocation. I mean the laws of honor."

"The laws of true honor," said Morton gravely, "are the moral laws we derive from religion or

from philosophy: outside these all is sophistry and falsehood."

For a moment Don Buenaventura was slightly dashed, but he immediately recovered himself and said:

"Strictly speaking that is perfectly true. But let us leave generalities. It is your obvious and inevitable duty to repair the injury you have done my niece, and for this some sacrifice is necessary. What does that mean? Honor demands it, and that law which governs all our actions—a law of which I do not pretend to trace the origin, but which is a law nevertheless and inexorable. It is a religion apart from theology, and which admits of no schism or heterodoxy. The only heresy known to it is lack of courage.—Here we have a sweet and virtuous girl who has suffered disgrace, a lovely and innocent victim—and this victim demands a great sacrifice on your part."

"The sacrifice of my religion?"

"Exactly."

"In the name of Honor?"

"Exactly."

"This is simply taking it for granted that religion is a mere matter of honor. But if I were to declare that the greatest dishonor I can conceive

of would lie in abjuring the faith into which I was born?"

"That must surely depend on the motives which lead to it. In a case like the present it is not so."

"Will you allow me to put before you a hypothetical case, and to ask your opinion?"

"With the greatest pleasure," said Lantigua haughtily, believing his own arguments to be much stronger than those of his opponent.

"Very good. Then suppose you were to go to Hamburg, to Amsterdam, or London."

"Yes, yes—I see your meaning.—Suppose I were to fall in love with a young Jewish lady and—in short that the whole circumstances were repeated under converse conditions—"

"Would you be prepared to make amends by the sacrifice of your religion?"

"That would depend on the young girl—"

"Such a girl as Gloria, Gloria herself—and I am supposing that you love her with absorbing passion."

"Man, to talk of becoming a Jew is a strong case. I can understand embracing Protestantism—but however, granting that I was desperately in love, and the terrible circumstances of the case—yes—I can declare that I would become a Jew."

“Señor de Lantigua,” said Morton with decision and dignity, “you have no religion; you are not a Catholic.”

The Spaniard was silent and confused; but soon conquering his embarrassment he said:

“I am a sincere Catholic by éducation, by conviction, by the saintly example set me by my admirable brothers—because I regard the Catholic as the most perfect religion; because, if my reason at any time plays me false, remembrance of my loving mother would come to fortify me, and the mere recollection of her and of the faith which, in her, gave rise to such transcendent virtues, would afford me strength and consolation; I am Catholic, because in Christ, the Son of God I see the most complete example of moral perfection that can be set before the eyes of men, and because I firmly believe in the forgiveness of sins and an eternal life to come.”

“None of these things are evidence of any very ardent faith; you accept what suits you and reject whatever repels you. Still, and even with so qualified a creed as this, I cannot believe you capable of turning Jew for the love of a woman—for a purely temporal happiness.”

“And for duty’s sake, under the overwhelming responsibility for a great sin,” added Lantigua

vehemently. "For these reasons and for others besides I should not hesitate to change, at any rate in seeming, the most acceptable religion under the sun even for the most discreditable."

"In seeming! that is to say under a mental reservation?" said Morton quite confounded.

"I see you are more intolerant in your false religion than I am in my true one. I can make some concession, you can make none. Nay, you must follow my example. You see I am neither a bigot, nor uncompromising, nor a hypocrite. I venture to think that my belief is at bottom not very dissimilar from yours or from that of any other man of the day."

"Pray how?" asked Morton with some curiosity:

"Is it possible that at the bottom of our convictions we do not think alike, Señor Morton? Oh! I am sure we do. Listen to me attentively; I believe that all religious faith, such as was held by our fathers, is daily losing ground and that sooner or later every strict form of worship is bound to lose even the vigor that still survives in it. I believe that all good and charitable souls can and will be saved without difficulty, whatever creed they profess. I believe that numberless dogmas upheld by the Church, far from increasing

faith serve to diminish it, and that in all creeds—and particularly in ours—there is more than enough of rule, and authority, and exercises. I believe that the salvation of cultivated souls will consist, if we can succeed in achieving it, in returning to primitive simplicity. I believe that if the religious authorities persist in increasing their influence to an unreasonable extent the critical spirit will fall foul of them. I believe that it is possible to effect a reconciliation between philosophy and faith, and that if it is not possible a terrific chaos must be the issue. I believe that the number of those who believe is rapidly diminishing, and that appears to me a fatal sign. I believe that no Nation or people can exist without a moral law which gives it vitality, and if the moral law is abrogated another must come in.—And all this, which I boldly declare, is what all the men of our day really think; what is the use of denying it? They are things which are but rarely said—and I myself always hold my tongue; for society must subsist on its present footing, if not through the fervency of our faith, at any rate through decent respect for the beliefs of the multitude. The circumstances under which we have now met have compelled me to speak my whole mind, to reveal all my thoughts and to express myself with entire

frankness, though the ideas I have given vent to but ill beseem my name, or the respect I owe to my brother who is dead, and to the exalted virtues of him who is living. And in acting thus, in revealing to you what no living soul has ever heard from my lips, I hope to find an echo in your mind, a certain harmony, though remote—for I regard you as a man familiar with current ideas, to whom it must be impossible to cling obstinately and tenaciously to the most discredited and discreditable of all sects. Finally, and to make an end of my avowal once for all, I believe the moral basis is with small differences one and the same in every civilized form of religion—or to speak more accurately, that a cultivated man, educated under the influences of European society is capable of the highest good under whatever name he invokes his God.”

This confession of faith was followed by a short silence. Morton sat with his eyes fixed on the oil-cloth table-cover, and wholly absorbed in the gravity of the subject, he mechanically twisted between his fingers a thread that happened to be lying there.

“I respect your avowal,” he said without looking up. “I knew, of course, that many of the heads of the Catholic community were at heart

rationalists. Now, in return for your concession, I will make some on my side."

"Well!" said Don Buenaventura to himself: "Who would ever have thought that I should turn my conscience inside out before a Jew! However it is necessary to compromise—ah, yes, to compromise; to give in a little that he may also give in a little, and we may meet half-way."

"My family, like yours," said the Hebrew, "is known for its religious zeal; like yours, it has always been courted and respected for its virtues and its liberality; it has always enjoyed, and still enjoys, a high reputation among our nation for maintaining with noble tenacity the fundamental idea of the continuity of the race, in the midst of the exile in which we live and the degradation into which so many of our brethren have sunk. I myself was brought up on elaborately strict principles; I was grounded in faith rather through my conscience than my imagination; my soul was appealed to and not my senses. Besides this the idea was inculcated that it was by means of our religion that all the great principles that govern the world were revealed to it, and that they have not lost all their value through the modifications they sustained on a day that is memorable to the world. I was taught to love a law which includes

all that is good and all that is true, since the world does not possess a single moral truth to which I cannot point in my sacred books. In affirming this I am far from asserting the extreme view that all outside that law is corrupt, immoral and false, as Catholics do of theirs. No—imitating you, I will even admit that the moral precepts by which we are governed are the same as govern the Christian world, and all men besides who adhere to rule and principle. I do not conceive that in any civilized community a religion prevails which says: 'Thou *shalt* kill, lie, steal, bear false witness—'

"Very good, very good," interrupted Lantigua, beaming with satisfaction. "You see how nearly we meet each other. What stands between us? Our worship—a form, a liturgy, a fiction, Señor Morton."

"Our worship!" exclaimed Daniel solemnly. "And you call that a fiction? It may be so for you, but not for me."

"And is it possible that any one who thinks as you think should attach any value to it?"

"Yes, I attach value to our form of worship, very great value."

"And why?"

"Because it is the note of our nationality. We have no country in the geographical sense and we

have made one out of the community of religious practice and of observance of our law. By reason of our social position, to us the ideas of country, family and faith are far more intimately blended than they are to you. To you religion is religion and nothing more; to us, besides being religion, it is race, it is a kind of fortified pale within which we live, it is our language and our honor—that honor of which you spoke just now, and which, among us, cannot be conceived of as independent of our continuity and our constancy in clinging lovingly to that time-honored and venerable creed for which we are contemned and mocked at.”

“All this is mere form; go to the bottom of the matter!” cried Don Buenaventura impatiently. “You have proved that you do not believe your religion to be superior in moral motive to mine.”

“But it is superior in antiquity and in simplicity. I firmly believe that all that God has ever revealed to man is contained in our law. Everything else is superfluous and a delusion. I loathe Christianity, not because it is false or evil, but because it is cruel and unnecessary.”

A thousand fulminating arguments rose to Don Buenaventura’s lips, terrible, convincing, and unanswerable; but he put a restraint on himself

before uttering them, and laying in a fresh stock of patience, he resigned himself to listen.

“There are reasons, both historical and social,” —the Hebrew went on—“terrible reasons why any defection or abjuration on our part must be more deeply disgraceful than that of other men.”

Don Buenaventura smiled disdainfully.

“Besides the fact that I feel an instinctive devotion to the God of my fathers and an invincible aversion to Christian innovations—”

Don Buenaventura’s patience was fast failing.

“Allow me, I entreat you, to proceed. Besides all this, I must obey the law of my race, and how inexorable are such traditions! The impassable gulf, which was fixed by Christians in order that we might live in moral isolation from all the rest of the human race, only encourages and intensifies our cohesion and continuity; the injuries we have suffered under, our expulsion from Spain, and the unjust contumely and hatred of all Christian peoples have only served to rivet us to our dogma, which to us has become the formula of nationality. Abjure it! Desert to the implacable foe, who, for eighteen centuries has insulted us, spit upon us and buffeted us—has exiled us, burnt us alive, debarred us from all respectable occupations, closed every door upon us, prohibited us every

office, and condemned us to no employment but the base trade of the usurer, who has loaded us with the grossest indignities, cutting us off from everything like human brotherhood and refusing us the enjoyment of our most natural rights, who had always looked upon us as an exception to the laws of humanity, as an abject and branded race, hooting us down with the infamous and absurd name of *deicides*. Who can kill God?—No, it can never be; there is not a man of honor among us who will ever desert to that ruthless and blood-thirsty enemy. Eighteen centuries of vengeance for having crucified a philosopher, a prophet—the greatest of philosophers if you will—is too great an excess of cruelty!”

“The punishment was deserved,” said Don Buenaventura; “and its awful duration proves it to be so. One year, or ten, or a century even, might seem doubtful, but there is no doubt about eighteen centuries. The magnitude of your condemnation commands respect.”

“It will never gain mine,” cried Morton with fury. “You have touched the tenderest chord of my heart—a heart which cherishes the purest love of race. My loyalty to my fallen nationality is a passion—to my simple and sublime worship, to my unhappy and despised people, who through

every thing, have preserved so precious a code of moral worth. I would I had a thousand tongues to proclaim it by every one. A people which has endured through eighteen centuries of proscription, of wandering, of oppression, and humiliation is worthy of a better fate."

"Set to work to amend it," said Lantigua sarcastically.

"I have passed hours in the bitterest grief, thinking of the unhappy fate of my race. As soon as I had learned to reason I could understand, notwithstanding that I lived in the midst of opulence, that there was a great void among us, though I could not detect what it was; I felt that a black cloud hung over us, that we were apart from others, that we were branded by society. I spent a large part of my youth in dismal reflections on our distressful social position, and at the same time the love I always felt for my caste and for its great historical traditions was fanned to a heat and violence that made my friends regard me as a madman. My youth was one long and sorrowful delirium; a dream in which the most audacious projects and the loftiest ideas were entangled in wild confusion. I dreamed of the restoration of Judaism, of blotting out the hideous curse; I passed whole years in gloom and solitude like the

Christian anchorites, meditating on the cross and passion—not of an individual, but of a whole innocent nation—and then, rushing abroad through all the countries where Israelites most congregate, I dared to attempt the task of such a tremendous undertaking. But notwithstanding the vastness of the burthen, I would not renounce the idea of bearing it, and even in hours of doubt and discouragement I felt myself filled with a mighty breath, an inspiration, the solemn voice of my outraged God, which said: “Go on.” To a man of such temper, who is possessed with the sacred fanaticism of race, who would not recoil from a thousand deaths if only he could witness a restoration which the century deems impossible—to a man who is not one of these shallow, superficial and disingenuous believers of the present day and who cannot regard the concerns of God, and of his conscience with indifference you come and say: “Abandon it all and humble yourself before me, come and kiss the brutal hand which for eighteen hundred years has constantly bruised you; come and worship the crucified teacher in whose name we have condemned you as beneath humanity.”

“In the name of Jesus Christ,” said Don Buenaventura, conscious that a fibre of true feeling had been touched in his heart, though it was

very deep down and the pain was not acute. "In the name of Him who redeemed the human race and transformed the whole world! It seems incredible that such darkened obduracy should exist in any clear and cultivated brain. Great God! what a fearful thing it is to have been born in error!—But there is one thing which prompts me to doubt the sincerity of your fanaticism. If you were in fact so absorbed in the idea of race, if this one idea wholly filled your mind, if it had guided all your life and all your actions and governed all your feelings, how is it Señor Morton, that you were betrayed into the weakness of falling in love with a Christian girl?"

"God allows us to be exposed to cruel trials. The lukewarm Catholics who think but little of God—the atheists who deny Him, and the Christian rationalists who have stripped Him of all his most glorious personal attributes, cannot understand this, they will laugh in their profane ignorance at such temptations as I allude to. But I believe in temptation as I believe in punishment, and my insensate and delirious passion was one of them; I yielded—I fell into deadly sin and I have suffered the most agonizing and fearful questionings that can be conceived of. What ought I to do? How ought I to strike the balance between my

social and my religious duties? This is the great doubt which has driven me to the utmost desperation and to longing for death—our Mother Death who gives a final answer to all questioning.”

“I did not invite you to come here—” said Lantigua gravely: “Nor indeed would you have come—that you should give yourself up to useless despair. It is indispensable that you should be reasonable and face the question—that terrible question which arises when we think of my niece—an innocent, sweet and lovely girl—my daughter I might almost say, for I regard her so.”

“You are right; I came anxious to face that question and to solve it.”

“But how?” cried Don Buenaventura indignantly. “Since I have heard what you have to say I gather that according to you, it is she who is to make this odious sacrifice.”

“No, no—I quite see that can never be—. There are other means.”

“I can discover none.”

“If I did not think that there were other means I should not have come, I should not have quitted London.”

“That is true.”

“The mere fact that I have so punctually obeyed your summons proves my wish for—”

"Conciliatory measures; good."

"But that can only be between her and me, her conscience and mine."

"It is of course necessary, quite necessary that you should see her," said Lantigua warmly.

"She must receive you; I have already told her so and she will obey me."

"The problem is a hard one; but, who knows?—I am ready to believe that on the question of creed it will not be difficult to arrive at an agreement that may be provisionally satisfactory; but the question of form is a very terrible one."

"Ah! yes; there no doubt the difficulty lies. But will it be impossible to find a formula?"

Don Buenaventura who in his political life—which to be sure had been neither wide nor brilliant—had excelled in the art of devising formulas, thought it quite possible that on the present occasion his genius might once more prove triumphant. Turning this over in his mind he added: "It does not seem impossible, though it is somewhat difficult. We shall see; I believe that if you and she meet and discuss it between you, some way will be found. Still, I reserve one very strong argument, an argument founded on sentiment, on tender feeling, and this I will leave till the right opportunity. This is not the moment for it."

"Nothing can carry us any farther forward till I see her and talk with her," said Morton uneasily.

"You shall see her. Her repugnance is extreme, but I will overcome it. There are difficulties on all sides; we have to reckon with the aversion and alarm that your presence produces among the ultra-religious population of this town. And the feelings of my own family are not more favorable to us; my sister persists in directing Gloria's views to ascetic seclusion, and this I highly disapprove of."

"And his Reverence Don Angel?"

"He is not here. But I fear him less than my sister—A formula! If I could but find a formula! But is it so very difficult? I cannot but think that among the three of us we may find some satisfactory, or at any rate admissible, solution. Anything rather than the ultimate dishonor of that hapless child!"

"Let me see her, that is the chief point—let me see her," said Morton eagerly.

"You shall see her."

"And beyond that all I ask is that I may be able to appear freely in public, that the ridiculous horror they have of me may cease, that I may go from place to place as I will; that my name may not be spoken with execration."

“Yes, yes!” said Lantigua, strongly impressed. “Before all things we must relieve you from that base popular detestation, an odium which is quite unworthy of modern progress.”

“Yes.”

“And find you a suitable lodging, decent and in the light of day, that you may not live in hiding like a thief.”

“Yes—that too.”

The worthy banker sat looking at the ground and supporting his chin with his right hand.

“Ah!” he suddenly exclaimed, striking his forehead with the palm of his hand, “I have an idea, a most happy idea.”

“What is that?”

“You must excuse my telling you at present.”

“But—”

“You shall have a suitable lodging and the virulence of public opinion shall be diminished, or at any rate qualified. —This very day you shall be aware of the results of my idea.”

“I should be glad to know what it is.”

“Trust in me,” said the banker rising. “We shall meet again soon; I will see what can be done at once.”

Señor de Lantigua did not wish to explain himself any farther, so he quitted the house, leav-

ing the Jew in no less difficulty than he had been in at the beginning of the conference. Morton went to the window and saw the grave-digger burying another dead form.

“An enemy the less in Ficóbriga,” thought he.

Lantigua meanwhile had hurried off in search of the curé, Don Silvestre Romero.

CHAPTER XII.

DON BUENAVENTURA'S FORMULA.

ON the evening of Palm-Sunday when, after the rout and dispersion of the procession Gloria and Serafina had gone home in consternation, the elder lady had sent off Roque in hot haste to Villamojada that he might at once send off the following telegraphic message :

“*To DON ANGEL MARIA, CARDINAL DE LANTIGUA, Archbishop of X., at the Bishop's Palace, Toulouse, France.*

Extreme peril. The enemy here. Come at once. SERAFINA.”

In the month of November past Don Angel had been raised to a metropolitan see, the well-

merited reward of his distinguished and illustrious virtues. In February the Supreme Pontiff had granted him the purple, and at the beginning of March he had gone to Rome to receive the cardinal's hat. In April he set out on his return journey in order to enter his new diocese before Holy-week, but in his journey across France to Bayonne he had been stopped on the way by his old enemy, rheumatic gout. To rebel against the rheumatism and the damp weather would have been to rebel against God ; so, having to resign himself, instead of fuming he only sighed. In spite of his crippled condition he persisted in going on ; however, the medical authorities ordered him to rest, and the Archbishop of Toulouse—who was his great friend—invited him to stay with him. His Eminence accepted, though with a bad grace, but his legs at last refused to second his will. However, in writing to his sister he said : “ I am not so ill but that I can set out if any urgent business requires it. If anything serious occurs in the family, or if the person you know of should make his appearance in Ficóbriga, let me know without loss of time, and if I can only creep I will continue my journey.”

The annalist has no exact information as to his Eminence's views and intentions and is almost

inclined to be so bold as to think that Serafinita, with the best will in the world, had not interpreted them with perfect justice. As to Don Buena-ventura we know already that it was his wish to put an end to this wretched conflict by means of marriage. He had not the faintest doubt as to the efficacy of the remedy; but the method of prescribing and administering it was the great difficulty to the excellent banker, who was a man of the world. The formula! In that lay the secret. It would have required Archimedes, Galileo and Newton—that is to say, their genius and sublime inventiveness, to discover that formula.

In public Don Buenaventura fought on the side of the Catholic party, which has extended to every branch of thought the intolerance which is the vital sinews of dogma. But it is an inexorable law of warfare that in fighting with a foe who has a definite scheme of tactics, we can learn those tactics, and adopt them ourselves. This is what happened to Don Buenaventura; the *habitué* of debates, of cabinet discussions and petty politics, he unconsciously learned at last all the fine arts of compromise. His mind, through constant friction with experts, at first began to imbibe them, then instinctively to use them, and finally to think them right and good.

He had vigorously defended the strictest unity of national worship, though without any special eloquence, and his remarks on marriages between persons of different creeds had been a thing to hear; but theoretical rhetoric is one thing and the overwhelming eloquence of facts is quite another, and far more convincing than all that was ever written in books. In face of the fact which had so deeply wounded his heart, Don Buenaventura began to waver greatly, and ended by admitting the insuperable need of a compromise; and this compromise was possible if only he could hit upon a formula.

He was so tenderly attached to his niece that he made no difference in his mind between her and his own children. He had made enquiries about Morton, in Madrid, through Baron W. and other Hebrews with whom he stood on friendly terms of cordiality or of business, and had thus made himself acquainted with the superior character of all the members of Morton's family, as well as his own.

"Either I make him marry, or I am less of a man than I thought," said Lantigua to himself. "As to the propriety and possibility of the transaction I have not a doubt. The means—the wretched formula, is all that is wanting."

As soon as he reached Ficóbriga, he confided his views to Romero, who seemed very well disposed to accept them. They discussed them, investigated them, reviewed them. Finally Don Silvestre, who had Gloria's interest sincerely at heart, said :

“ There is no remedy but to rescue her at any cost from this miserable position. It is not a mere theory that is at stake ; it is a fact, an undeniable, patent and disastrous fact. I have no doubt that in order to prevent such facts the one true religion ought to intrench itself in greater intolerance ; that it should exile, burn, condemn and excommunicate—but here we have not to prevent, but to cure. No authority, divine or human, would be so bold as to say under such circumstance, ‘leave the evil as you find it.’ What we need here is a formula, a compromise in terms.”

Don Silvestre was henceforth the confidant of all his excellent friend's scheming. Both, without ceasing to be Catholics and to put forward the most rigid opinions, were men of the world ; they had known something of society, had tasted charms of practical life, the one in the course of business, the other in his pursuit of natural pleasure ; each had learnt to say : “ We must beware of the current or it will carry us away ;

but if an arm of the sea breaks in and drags us off our feet it is folly to struggle against it, we can only succumb and evade it."

Don Buenaventura was by no means prepared to admit of a merely civil marriage in the case in question, nor did it enter into his views that Gloria should settle in a foreign country. The 'formula,' which would have best pleased him would have been a marriage contracted and conducted with all the outward and visible signs of religious unity. "I should be satisfied," thought he, "amply satisfied with a mere semblance of apostasy—really he will be a wretch if he does not concede it—only think of the advantages he will gain by it. And after all is not the basis, the root of all creeds the same? Social exigencies require that we should maintain shades of difference in the forms of worship, but these ought to vanish at once before a social duty of such magnitude.—But this will be the necessary formula; yes, I have it! and I will propose it: a feigned conversion, with a mental reservation. Great God of all, it is impossible but that thou must be the same to all! Ah! that is one of the pernicious opinions that we men of a certain position never, never give utterance to; no, they must never be spoken, still it is an irrepressible, insurgent, dia-

bolical fact which we keep buried at the bottom of our souls.—If my brother suspected it—”

After the meeting, of which a full report has been given, he had a long conversation with Don Silvestre, before high-mass, and they entirely agreed as to the necessity for rehabilitating the Jew in the public opinion of Ficóbriga, and of arranging an interview with Gloria.

“Ah!” said Don Buenaventura. “If that hapless child persists in her refusal to see him, I will show her that I am in authority over her—Mystical piety is all very well, but now the matter to be settled is a score with society. Her account with God is wiped out, and the poor orphan’s pardon must long since have been signed up above; of that I am sure, very sure.”

And then, thinking of Morton, he went on: “I fancy the chief difficulties will not be raised on his side; his fanaticism is more a matter of race than of religion; and if, after all, he hesitates I have a tremendous argument which I am reserving for the critical moment, one founded in feeling, in affection, which will I think pierce his most sensitive point.”

On the Monday in Holy-week a rumor began to be audible in Ficóbriga which within a few hours made the round of the whole town and

found its way into every house, like some strong and sudden blast which finds every door wide open and sweeps into every cranny and corner. This report was that Señor Daniel Morton had come to Ficóbriga with the intention of embracing the Catholic faith. This good news spread with the rapidity usually attributed to bad news, and produced a stunning effect on a community which was as credulous as it was simple. Every mouth was full of it during the whole of Monday and Tuesday, and it was hailed on all sides with exclamations of satisfaction and laudatory commentaries. Some there were who declared they had actually heard it from the Curé himself, or the not-less-to-be respected Don Juan Amarillo. Equal astonishment was caused by the announcement that the foreigner had been comfortably quartered in one of the better houses of Ficóbriga, and that Don Angel was expected every hour, to bestow the benefits of the gospel on the neophyte. Of course these rumors did not fail to reach the house of the Lantiguas, and finding the door open there also, they flew in and upstairs and downstairs, all round the house. But it was not alone by way of the servants, for the Curé himself, confirming them in his own venerable person gave them the countenance of his authority. On

Tuesday he went to the house to see his 'beloved penitent,' and before her and Doña Serafinita, he spoke of the wonderful news which was flying round the town. Don Buenaventura confirmed it, but the two women said nothing.

"If it is true," said Romero, determined that the report should impress the person it was intended to impress: "If it is true, this conversion will become celebrated. Here is a laborer in the vineyard who comes late indeed, but who, as Christ has taught us, will receive the same as those who came in early. This conversion will be a glorious event for our humble little town, and for me too whose good fortune it was to snatch him from the waves."

Seeing that the ladies appeared to pay no heed to the speech, he turned to Don Buenaventura and went on:

"Yes, I drew him out the waters as if he had been a fish, so that if I had not fished him out—and here I am reminded of the words of our Lord to the Apostles, when he found them mending their nets on the shore of the lake of Gennesareth: 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.' And if, after all it falls to my lot to baptize him, I may say in a double sense, that I have been the fisher of a man."

Gloria, who was reading the prayers for Holy-Tuesday, looked so closely at her book, that it seemed as though she could not command her mind to understand what she was reading without, as it were, putting the words into her eyes. Serafina remained silent and immovable, as though her mind, her will, and her faith dwelt in a region far above all the petty events of earth.

“When the curé was going, Don Buenaventura said to him :

“It is enough that she knows it—the notion must have time to take effect. Hers is not a head stuffed with straw, and when once an idea has got into it—Ah! Don Silvestre, I believe I have hit on the formula, the much-wished-for formula.”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GREAT SECRET.

IN the evening of Wednesday Serafinita went with her niece to take a turn in the garden. They talked of indifferent matters ; but the girl spoke so little, that from time to time Doña Serafina could not help pausing in her discourse to ask : “What are you thinking of?”

“Of nothing,” said Gloria.

“Of very much, on the contrary,” said her aunt smiling. “Do not be afraid that I shall quarrel with you on that account. I know too well how difficult it is to purge one’s mind utterly of all worldly things. You will yet have to struggle greatly, to suffer torments, to endure fearful assaults of the evil one, to fight desperately before your mind is purified and free to consecrate itself wholly to God. To reach this state of grace, my daughter, there is no better way than through misfortune, and I am the living proof of it.—Still there is something to be said on your side. You despair of yourself for a time—the idea is cruel, but very salutary. Think of the parable of the pearl-merchant told by our Lord: finding one pearl that was more beautiful than any he had, he sold all he possessed to buy it. You, in the same way, to purchase the pearl of the Kingdom of Heaven must sell all, absolutely all that you possess.”

“All but one thing—” said Gloria timidly.

“God will not accept the sacrifice of small things without that of great ones. What have you offered to Him as yet? The pleasures of the world, your social position, your good fame, your fair repute.—All this counts for nothing; what

He asks for is your heart. Our hearts are the jewels we must offer to the Almighty Father; these are the diamonds and pearls of which His throne is built. Do you imagine it sufficient to forgive injuries, and to be humble and resigned in suffering, scorn and calumny?"

"I know that the merit is but small, dear aunt," answered Gloria. "I know that there are greater sacrifices, far greater. Happy are the souls that have strength enough to make them! I do not see that I need suffer misfortune to make me forgive my enemies; if I had had any formerly I would have forgiven them just the same. And indeed I cannot boast much of my humility, for I am far from truly humble, I know that I am not; and as regards scorn and calumny, there is small virtue in suffering the first patiently, for it matters very little—as to calumny, if any is afloat it has not reached my ears."

"Yes indeed, calumny is afloat, my dearest niece; you are slandered and I will tell you how, that you may forgive the evil-speakers."

"It is no calumny to speak of me as disgraced."

"That is not the question. I speak of real calumny, of base and mean falsehoods propagated by those who call themselves our friends, and who

owe us respect and consideration, or, to say the least of it, the charity which is due from one Christian to another."

"The insults of which I was the object are odious enough," said Gloria: "but as the outcome of the grossest superstition they deserve no particular attention."

"I do not refer to the incident of the flowers on the foal," said Serafina. "That, having kept the tongues of Ficóbriga wagging long enough, has now become a matter of history. No, I am speaking of an actual piece of slander, a real calumny which is afloat concerning your conduct. This morning, my child, I went through a terrible moment of anguish and shame as I heard—" The worthy lady's voice was choked with agitation; however, with an effort she went on:

"Teresita la Monja, a woman to whom we have always shown the most marked respect, told me the most abominable things about you. It needed all my patience, all the meekness and self-control I possess, not to break out in disgraceful rage.—Indeed, child, there are some things one cannot hear patiently.—Listening to that woman I had to make an almost superhuman effort to smother my indignation—I could not answer a

word, I could only burst in tears before her and her friends."

"And what did she say of me?" asked Gloria tranquilly.

"It is so horribly and odiously scandalous that I blush to repeat it; still, I will tell you, because in drinking this one more bitter cup you have a fresh opportunity for forgiving—"

"Forgiving!"

"Yes, forgiving these women, as I forgave them. I do not even wish to comment on their malice, I will not even abuse them as they abused you, I will only say: 'Lord forgive them, for they know not what they say.'"

"But what is it?"

"You will be shocked beyond measure—but no matter. They say that at night, when every one is asleep in our house and in the town, you go out—yes, go out by stealth, to a solitary spot hard by the cemetery, to meet the wretched author of all your misery."

Gloria turned pale and stood as still, as white and silent as marble. Nevertheless, her astonishment was no indication of the distress of a conscience startled by discovery.

"I understand your horror," the old lady went on. "Oh! how many tears I myself have shed.

To hear such a thing! I, I who would put my hand in the fire a hundred times over to testify to your innocence in this matter—I wanted to speak but my tongue was paralyzed—and Teresita laughed! You should have seen the mean audacity with which she declared that she herself had seen you.”

“ Seen me !”

“ Yes, she says she saw you on Monday night. It was past midnight; she was called out to a niece who had been taken ill—the eldest daughter of Gil Barrabás, the notary.—She says she saw you go out of the house and turn down the little street towards the gate—but in short, I need not torment you with the details; what a false, infamous calumny !”

True it was that Teresita la Monja had detailed this great piece of scandal to Serafina; and it is well to state this, lest any reader should be capable of doubting the veracity of the good lady, who was perfectly incapable of a lie. The hideous story had flown from mouth to mouth round the whole circle of godly ladies, and altogether neutralized the favorable impression produced in the town by the report of the conversion of the Israelite.

“ At first I thought it would be wiser not to

repeat these abominations;" Serafina added in perfect good faith; "but afterwards I decided that you should know of them, that you might have the ineffable satisfaction of forgiving these women—I will not qualify them as they deserve; I hope only to forgive them, and to pray to God for their souls. Oh! child, this elevating joy of the spirit, which can ignore backbiting and forgive the slanderer, is granted to none but Christian souls. You do forgive them?"

"From the bottom of my heart," said Gloria shaking herself out of the stupor into which the information had plunged her. "If they repeat the offence a hundred times, I can forgive them a hundred times."

"That is just how I wish you to feel," said Serafina embracing and kissing her niece, with a burst of affection and pious fervor.

They spoke no more of the matter. As it was growing dark Caifás appeared to give an account of certain alms he was in the habit of distributing on account of the ladies, and Gloria, calling him up to her own room, gave him some more money and instructions, as to which we have no information. Later in the evening the three Lantiguas took their supper together; the old lady told her rosary with a congregation of the whole house-

hold, and when it was time to retire Don Buena-ventura went to his room, while Serafina accompanied Gloria to hers, for it was her custom now always to keep her company till she was in bed and was yielding to the gentle influence of sleep.

“Good-night, my child,” she said laying her hand on her niece’s head. “Sleep in peace. Shall I put out your light? There—it is out.” She blew out Gloria’s candle and, taking up her own, kissed the child tenderly and was gone. For a few minutes her steps were audible as she went down-stairs, but at last the sound ceased, and the dim light that shone through the blind was extinguished.

Gloria was not asleep; wide awake and watchful in the darkness, her dark eyes were fixed on the black void as if it were some pleasing vision, and her ear was open to all the whispers of the night. Half frightened at her own excitement, she pressed her hand to her heart to feel its throbs, sighing now and then, and moving noiselessly in her bed. Then, some time after her aunt had gone down, she raised her head, leaned on her elbow, and held her breath that the slight noise might not mingle with the distant sound she wanted to catch.

The last doors that were shut in the house had creaked on their hinges, from time to time she

could hear what sounded like subterranean noises—the pawing of the mules on the ground of their stable; then the barking of watch-dogs, roused to fury by some passing shadow; and more persistent than the rest, the quavering croak of the toads, those songsters of the dewy night. Gloria's ears, rendered more acute by the excited state of her mind, seemed to sound the depth of the silence so as to be quite sure that the street was absolutely deserted and still.

“Yes—they are asleep,” she thought. “Everyone is asleep.”

She continued to listen, however, and now she could distinguish the dashing of the sleepless and never silent sea, as if the beating of the waves in the quiet night were the calm throbbing of a heart at rest. Gloria counted their rhythm, and without the aid of a clock could estimate the minutes as they passed. The past was forgotten, her whole soul was in the present, and in that eager vigil: time slipped on, an hour—two hours—

“It must be time now,” thought she. “What has come to the Abbey clock to-night that it does not strike?”

Hardly had the thought passed through her mind when she heard the first stroke, slow, hollow, heavy, long-drawn as a dirge. Gloria sprang up

like a spirit that awaits its hour of release ; by the second stroke she had found her clothes, feeling about in the darkness but making no mistake, for she knew perfectly well where she had laid each garment. The clock went on slowly striking and Gloria dressed in desperate haste, tying tapes and fastening buttons in the dark with an unerring hand ; the tapes twisted round her slim waist like little snakes. The clock was silent again by the time Gloria was dressed, with her shoes on and wrapped in her black cloak ; she stood up and took a few steps, her hands stretched out before her as if clinging to the invisible hands of a phantom that guided her. She did not run against any piece of furniture, nor make a single false step, and she reached the door, which opened as noiselessly as if it turned on hinges of cotton-wool. She passed along the corridor like a disembodied shade borne on the air, and her steps were as inaudible as if she walked on clouds. She took a long time in going down-stairs, cautiously setting a foot on each step, and if any faint creak of the wood-work answered to her tread she paused, full of alarm, and suppressing even the slightest movement. At last she was at the bottom, and there, as the floor was paved in quarries, she could tread with less precaution. The pale light of the sky, in which

the moon showed from time to time, allowed her to discern the corners, the walls and the doors in the passage. Before one of these Gloria stopped for a moment and listening at the keyhole, explored the silence, as it were, that reigned within.

“All asleep!” she said to herself.

Without any farther delay she entered a room which was the last in the newer building; there she knocked twice at a side door, which was opened by an invisible hand with a slight clatter. Gloria went on into the old house, accompanied now by some one who guided her through the darkness. But her way lay but very little longer through such deep obscurity, for at length she herself, with a key she carried, opened a door and went out across the yard into the street, where a man was awaiting her. He gave her his hand to help her down the steps and then both vanished without exchanging a word.

CHAPTER XIV.

SEÑOR MORTON AT HOME.

AT the request of Don Buenaventura, whom he was most anxious to oblige, the Alcalde himself—Don Juan Amarillo—had found a decent lodging for Daniel Morton; for it was not becoming to the civilized advancement of Ficóbriga, nor to the proverbial hospitality of that famous township, that every door should be closed with impious inhospitality against any human being. To these arguments, as urged by Lantigua, Amarillo added others of no less weight; for instance, that the Jew was a person of high social position and of ample wealth, and the same measure ought not to be meted to him as to the vulgar herd; that our holy religion could lose nothing by our giving shelter to the stranger, and that the gospel enjoined us to do good to our enemies. As, at the same time, a report had been whispered regarding the conversion of the Israelite, the alcalde was not afraid that the populace would take umbrage, and seeing that everything was favorable to his plans, he addressed himself in the first instance to

Isidorita la del Rebenque—who during the bathing season had several rooms to let to strangers—and proposed that she should take the Hebrew under her protecting roof. Isidorita listened to the suggestion with extreme dissatisfaction, and if the authors who have written the chronicles of her house have not exaggerated the facts, her utterance failed her and the roses in her cheeks turned to colorless lilies, while for some minutes she looked as if she were going to faint. However, Amarillo advised her not to choke before her time without sufficient reason, and added that he, as the Alcalde would take the whole responsibility on himself. So, as the Curé—who put in an appearance at the appropriate moment—seconded Don Juan's proposal and authorized the lady to give shelter to the infidel, assuring her that her house would be perfectly free from taint now that she had permission from the parish priest, the worthy wife of the misbelieving Barrabás, by degrees recovered her composure. And her scruples were entirely removed by a fresh argument from Don Juan, who stated that Señor Morton, who was undoubtedly about to become a convert to the true faith, would pay every day a liberal sum for his own board and lodging and another for those of his servant. His man being set at liberty, and his

luggage having arrived, master and squire went into their new quarters on Monday evening. The only condition imposed upon them by Don Juan, was that they should not show themselves in the streets of Ficóbriga so long as the public ceremonials of Holy-week were going on. Both, of course, were ready to promise this, and showed their breeding by their gratitude to the zealous representative of public authority who so well understood all the duties of his position. The servant too was a Jew, and a pugnacious one; Samson was his name and he did it credit, for he was a powerful colossus, with hands like the head of a mace; he was docile and affectionate to his master though offensive to others, diligent in his service but a great chatterbox; however, as he could not speak a word of Spanish, he was reduced to talking to himself for hours at a time. He was somewhat the worse for bruises on the head, but they were not serious.

Isidorita gave them the three best and prettiest and most comfortable rooms in the house, furnished without luxury it is true, but with perfect cleanliness, and from the very first day she treated them with great attention, giving them plenty to eat and well cooked and served. In fact the Señora Barrabás was a woman with a conscience,

and she could not bear to treat the foreigners meanly in consideration of the splendid payment she received daily and without fail from Morton. Morton only stipulated that his isolation from the family should be complete, as his wish was neither to trouble them nor to be troubled; and this was highly displeasing to the master of the house, who was a great gossip, while Isidorita approved, as always rating discretion above all other virtues.

From the very first moment the good woman saw in her lodger an eminently respectable gentleman, full of politeness, delicate feeling and generosity; and this, added to the report of his conversion and to the energy with which Teresita approved of his reception, by degrees silenced the anxious conscience of the worthy woman. The first day she could not divest herself of some suspicions, and in Morton's presence she felt a certain terror; on the second day she found ample excuse for stopping to talk to him, and found his conversation tolerably agreeable; and by the third she did not know how to do enough to please him. Goodwill was never more easily won. Morton avoided all conversation with the mistress of the house, whose love of gossip increased from hour to hour; and when she and her husband could find no excuse for making their way into the stranger's

company they amused themselves with making Samson stammer over Spanish words, he having made friends very quickly with the philosopher. They sat together in the evening in the room down-stairs, their conversation eked out by signs, all laughing heartily while they emptied sundry bottles of beer—paid for by the son of Israel, for Isidora never allowed her philosopher the indulgence of spending the smallest coin—consumed cheap cigars, and talked without either understanding the other. After the exciting advent of Isidora's new lodger, not an evening passed that Teresita did not drop in, to question, to pry, and to comment; to pick up and to discuss every word that the Hebrew gentleman might have uttered. Not a movement, not a gesture, nor a tone—neither his coming in nor his going out—but was made the subject of a prolix discussion. And the trio—for the moon would have failed in her orbit before Romualda would have missed a gossip—were no less busy about the Lantiguas, their house, Gloria herself, and her unheard of, scandalous and disgraceful proceedings; for Teresita persisted in declaring that she had seen her, and was ready to swear to it by all the saints of Heaven. On that Monday night, when she had been sent for to her niece, the notary's daughter, she had

seen Señorita Gloria come out of her house and go towards the cemetery with a man. Her two friends tried not to believe her, but dame Amarillo invoked half the company of Heaven and God himself to witness her statement. Isidorita for her part thought that Señor Morton had been out almost the whole of Monday night; she could say nothing as to Tuesday night, because he had a key and he and his servant could go out without been seen; however, she promised solemnly to watch him and to keep her friends informed of all that might happen.

When her two visitors had retired to assist at the night service on Wednesday, Isidorita was called up by her lodger to receive some instruction as to his meals; and after briefly settling this matter the lady said :

“ Are you going out this evening ? ”

“ No, Señora.”

“ As you were out the whole of Monday night— ”

Daniel did not answer; and Isidorita, displaying an eager interest in the concerns of the infidel who was under her roof, went on :

“ If you will allow me I will take the liberty of offering you some advice.”

And as Daniel expressed himself very ready to accept her counsels, she proceeded :

“ I would advise you to be very cautious in dealing with the Lantiguas. They are very excellent people, but exceedingly tenacious, and they never allow any one—”

“ Pray proceed.”

“ After all I am meddling in what does not concern me, and I fear I may be troublesome.”

“ Not in the least.”

“ Well, as the interests of so worthy a person are involved.—What I wish to say is, you will do well to be on your guard if you propose to continue your secret interviews with Señorita Glrcia at midnight.”

“ I!” exclaimed Morton astonished.

“ Of course, I do not expect you to account to me for your actions, and you will do exactly as you think proper. But if Don Buenaventura does not see you one night he may another, and it would bring trouble, real trouble.”

“ Señora! you are afraid Don Buenaventura may see us? Where, may I ask? and at what hour?” said the Hebrew with eager interest.

“ That you know better than I can. My sister-in-law, who is a person absolutely incapable

of falsehood, saw Señorita Gloria leave the house at midnight with a man—”

“Leave the house!”

“With a man—”

“With a man!”

“Yes, Señor. She saw her on Monday night when she was called up to Nicanora—my brother-in-law’s daughter—and then on Tuesday night she watched out of her window—for Teresita lives next door, as you know—but I do not know whether she saw her go out. Much as we may wish to conceal certain things, Señor Morton, we cannot do it. The folks here have a hundred eyes, even in the darkness of midnight. The natives of Ficóbriga are somewhat inquisitive, and news flies round in a marvellous manner. There is not a soul in the town by this time that does not know—”

“That the Señorita Gloria goes out?”

“To meet you. It is quite natural.—However, I am meddling in what is no concern of mine, am I not, Señor Daniel? and am troubling you. Good-night, Señor caballero,” and she withdrew.

The Jew sat in profound meditation; then for a long time he paced up and down his room. When his servant came to undress him he said;

“We are going out; come.”

CHAPTER XV.

WHERE IS SHE GOING? WHERE HAS SHE
BEEN?

MORTON had the key of the front door and could go in and out as suited him without asking permission of the owners of the house. It was after half past eleven when they went out; the night was clear and crisply cold. The moon was full, but there were many clouds about, flying up from the sea towards the mountains, and her face was veiled at intervals; even when she shone between them she seemed to be gliding along, snatched away by vaporous white arms, whose giant waving in the distant ether seemed to threaten all who dared to wander at such an hour on earth, and filled them with vague fears.

“Where are we going to-night?” asked Samson, who could not conceal a home-sickness for his bed.

“That remains to be seen,” said Morton gloomily.

“Oh sir!” said the man, as he walked along the street at his master’s left hand. “If I might make

so bold I would remind you of certain passages of scripture: 'Remove sorrow from thy heart and put away evil from thy flesh, for childhood and youth are but vanity.' 'I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit.' " Morton made no reply.

"Ah sir!" Samson went on with a smile. "To be sure it is not my place to offer advice, nor to point out danger to my master, for the master is wise, the servant a dolt; still I cannot help remembering the proverbs of our scripture and they slip out of my mouth when I least mean it. With your permission I feel inclined to say to you: 'He goeth after her straightway as an ox goeth to the slaughter or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; as a bird hasteth to the snare and knoweth not that it is for his life.' "

"We will turn down this alley," said Morton, paying no heed to his henchman's condition, "to the Lantiguas' house."

They were now close to the little plaza, already christened '*de Lantigua*,' and there they stopped.

"So that you are not going down to the shore to-night?" said Samson. "We are to keep sentry here; in this delightful spot, staring at the moon?"

Morton, with his eyes fixed on the house, gave

no attention to his servant's verbose exhortations, but Samson went on :

“ I discerned among the youths a young man void of understanding, passing through the street near her corner, in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night ; and behold there met him a woman subtle of heart, loud and stubborn ; her feet abide not in her house—’ ”

“ Hold your tongue, idiot ! ” said Daniel suddenly, putting his hand over the man's mouth to staunch the fountain of his wisdom. “ Do you see ? out of that side door, there came a woman.”

“ I see a man.”

“ Yes—a man is with her,” said Morton in a choked voice.

“ Samson—if you utter a single sound I will trottle you. Here, hide behind this corner—they are coming this way.”

A figure had come out of the door into the side street and joining another which was waiting outside, hastily walked towards the plaza ; there, turning to the left, they took a street which led into the town.

“ We must follow them,” said Morton. “ Let us go at the same pace, and make no noise—I know her—it is she. And Caiús is with her.”

Morton saw them turn off from the high-street

and go to the steps and door-way through which he had been led on Sunday night.

"They are going to the cemetery," thought he in astonishment. "What does this mean?"

Gloria and Caifás went up the steps but instead of crossing to the cemetery they went to the left, under the wall, and they walked at a good pace as if they were pressed for time. Daniel and Samson followed them at some little distance along the edge of a field which was bounded by the wall.

"They are gaining on us. We have lost sight of them!" exclaimed Morton, eagerly hastening his steps.

"We shall overtake them," said Samson.

The foremost couple, who had for a moment disappeared from the sight of the pursuers, were now again in sight. They had increased their pace and passing close by the low houses of a very poor quarter seemed to be directing their steps towards a narrow lane which led to the high-road.

"There is a clump of trees there," said Morton, hurrying after them. "If they get into that we shall lose them altogether."

However, Gloria and her escort stopped. Morton could hear the sound of a short dialogue and of a voice talking to a restive horse. The two

men ran forward but they had not gone far when they saw a break driving on and which seemed to be carrying several persons; it was going at a good speed towards the high-road.

They ran after it, but the vehicle was well ahead and soon disappeared; the hollow rumble continued for some time and was presently lost in the vague solemn monologue of the night.

Daniel Morton was left standing in the high-road, perplexed and disconsolate.

“Where is she gone?” He asked in vain. “Will she return?”

His perplexity was of the dull and speechless kind that bewilders a man who witnesses some phenomenon which, though inexplicable, takes place within the circle of human reason.

“I certainly saw her!” he thought. “I saw with my own eyes, and it was undoubtedly she.—Why did I not call her? Why did I not speak—shout her name?”

He sat down on a stone, he thought for a long time.

“Ah!” he exclaimed at last. “I know—she has fled from her family and home.—But then she will not come back.”

“She will not come back,” repeated Samson, seating himself on the ground by his master.

"It would be folly to seek her any farther, and now, even if you object, I must make so bold as to say sir—"

"Samson, leave me in peace," said Mortori. "Do you think she will return? Tell me what you think about that."

"I think that 'the prudent man seeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished.' We have seen the evil, let us hide—that is to say, let us get back to London, to-morrow, sir, to-morrow."

"My good fellow," said Daniel, pursuing his own train of thought, "there is here some great mystery which we fail to understand."

"What I understand," said the servant, "is that it is written: 'A strange woman is a deep pit, he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.'"

"Samson, Samson!" cried Daniel, fully possessed with a sudden thought which dawned upon his mind like growing day. "I am certain she will return. My heart tells me she will return."

"And are we to stay here till she does sir?"

"We will stay here as long as it is dark. Are you cold? Then take my overcoat and put it on over your own."

"Thank you, sir. And is it indispensable that I should keep awake?"

“No, you may sleep if you are able. I will rouse you in case of need.”

“Then with your leave,” said Samson, stretching himself on the ground, “I will take a nap, for ‘what profit hath a man of all his labor that he getteth under the sun? One generation passeth away and another cometh, but the earth abideth for ever. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.’” And within a few minutes of having uttered this last text, he was asleep.

His master, still watchful, never took his eyes from the utmost visible limit of the high-road and of the rising hills which bounded his view. He could distinguish nothing in the dark mass fitfully lighted by the moon. The black trees overshadowed the side paths; still the Jew, giving up his whole soul to the task, searched the black immensity for the track of the bird whose flight he had witnessed; and such is the power of will that at last he detected it. He could see nothing it is true, but his eager curiosity, spurred to inspiration, felt assured of the existence of a mysterious wake left by a heart that had flown in search of its love.

It was like the assurance of faith, the substance of things hoped, the evidence of things not seen.

Presently he heard a cock crow, and the answering call of others far and near, forming a jubilant and encouraging concert. In all nature, next to the human voice, there is none so stirring and inspiring as that of this bird—a shrill triumphant call across the silent country, flung out in some lucid interval in his complacent slumbers and saying to man: “I am the type of cheerfulness and peace, of simplicity, industry and toil.”

Daniel listened to the distant clarion. “She must soon be back now,” thought he. “If my heart has cheated me this time, I will never trust it again so long as I live.”

More than an hour and a half had passed since the disappearance of the carriage, when Daniel fancied he again heard the sound of wheels; it was nothing more definite than a conviction; there was nothing positive as derived from actual sensation. He waited, and in a few minutes was certain that a carriage was approaching.

“Samson, wake, get up,” he called, pulling the man by the arm. “Wake up lazy-bones.”

“Sir—yes sir!” said Samson, rubbing his

eyes. "Are we going to London? I dreamed that I was going on board and I said—"

"Say nothing. Be ready to do exactly what I bid you. You have a sturdy pair of fists. Stop this carriage."

"What carriage?"

"This one, coming. Do not you hear?"

They could now see the carriage which came swiftly onward, drawn by two horses.

"Two horses!" said Samson.

"And if there were twenty, we must stop them."

The break came on, and Samson, planting himself in the middle of the road, with his arms thrown up like a missionary exhorting his flock, called out:

"Stop!"

But the driver plied his whip, lashing the intruder who attempted to stop the carriage all across the face; at the same instant the horses threw up their heads, checked by a hand of iron that had clutched the reins; they resisted and made their way a few paces farther, then the vehicle stopped with a jerk; a woman's voice cried out in terror—a boy shouted "Thieves!" and Caifás, who was driving, exclaimed with an elaborate oath: "Just what I feared!"

Daniel Morton, seizing Mundideo by the arm, dragged him hastily off the coach-box, and then put his arms into the carriage, which was a sort of wagonette with oil-cloth curtains. A weeping and terrified woman was inside and with her a boy, of whom Morton took not the slightest heed; this was Sildo. Gloria did not speak a word; for an instant she attempted to resist the strong arms that held her, but it was useless. Morton lifted her out like a child.

“Señor, for God’s sake!” cried Caifás, falling on his knees at the Jew’s feet.

“Go on! said Daniel. Samson you go too as far as the outskirts of the town.”

“Leave me, let me go!” murmured Gloria, as the others drove away. “Oh! let me go; I did not send for you, or seek you, and I do not want to see you.”

CHAPTER XVI.

A PRISONER.

“THE case is precisely the reverse with me,” said Morton tenderly clasping the girl in spite of her resistance. “I have sought you, I do want and must see you.”

Gloria still struggled to free herself and fly.

"I shall not let you go now," said Daniel. He sat down on a large stone by the road-side without setting Gloria down, and held her on his knees as if she were no heavier than a child.

"Here you are and here you must stay, whether you will or no," he said stammering with vehemence, and clasping the girl more closely in his strong arms. "Now it is my turn and I will not let you go, my life that I have made my own! You see it is impossible to escape from those who love us. If you were to bury yourself under the earth, the earth would open to yield you up to me. Gloria, Gloria, why have you shut your doors upon me, why do you fly from me?"

"Let me go," she repeated. "Let me go. The more you oppose me the more I shall dread you. For God's sake set me free; do not torture me any more."

"Torture you! I?"

"And not for the first time. I implore you, let me go."

Clasped in her lover's arms, Gloria could not move and the cloak in which she was wrapped, while it had fallen away from her pathetic and tearful face, held her limbs more tightly imprisoned.

“Do not try to get loose or I shall hold you so tight that I shall suffocate you.”

“I do not love you—no, I do not want you!”

“And I do love you—that is enough.”

“I hate and loathe you.”

“It is false!—it is impossible. If you had ceased to love me I should have known it, seen it written on the face of nature—the sun would not have shone with the same light.”

“Let me go!”

“Let you go! Release you! Give up the treasure I have won!—You are out of your wits. And in the instant when I am thankful to have been born, when I am glad to have lived through years of misery, when I triumph in being here and every thought is gladness!”

“But what do you want?—Are you mad?” said Gloria wearily.

“What do I want? To die with you or give you the life you deserve—”

“But I do not want you with me.”

“And without you I should die—Gloria, you know it, and you try to drive me away. And, then when you kneel to your God you will look into your conscience and see it calm and self-satisfied, without once remembering the poor wretch

who lives only in the hope of seeing you and craving your pardon."

"I forgive you—but let me go."

"Yes—and when we have parted I will go down to the sea—to that kind friend who has long been calling me to itself, and I will tie a stone round my neck and plunge in—then my Gloria I shall cease to trouble you."

"For God's sake!" sighed Gloria faintly. "You are suffocating me!"

Morton slightly released his grasp and she breathed more freely.

"So," she said softly, "so! Now, let me go and I will bear you no grudge."

"Why do you use me so? Why do you fly? Why should a few minutes in my society be so horrible to you? Why, only to see and hear you do you force me to waylay you and take you prisoner?"

"Because I must, I must," answered Gloria ceasing her struggles to free herself.

"And yet in avoiding me, in shutting yourself up, in closing your door upon me, you are not happy," said Morton, kissing her passionately. "You are suffering."

Gloria could make no reply that did not come as pure and unequivocal truth from the bottom of

her heart, and as water must flow spontaneously and freely from the spring, the words came unbidden to her lips.

“Suffer! Yes—I have much to suffer.” She sighed deeply and closed her eyes.

“I know it,” said Morton. “All your griefs, my heart’s love, find their echo in my soul and have their duplicate in me; your wounds are my wounds, for it is my fate to live in your life and die in your death.”

“It cannot be!” exclaimed Gloria once more endeavoring to free herself. “Each must live for himself.—Let me go on my own way, oh! for mercy’s sake, I implore you to let me go.”

“No.—Can you not bear to have a moment’s respite from martyrdom?”

“I do not want respite or rest. If I lived a hundred lives of suffering they would not suffice to expiate my guilt.”

“But I swear to you that I will not consent to it,” exclaimed Daniel vehemently excited.

“To what?”

“To this atrocious separation. I will break every law; but in this they shall not succeed, I swear it! If need be you shall see what there is most brutal and most violent in my nature. Prepare yourself, for I say to you, as I clasp you and

hold you at this instant, I mean to hold you through eternity. Do you want to satisfy the curiosity that is consuming me, to give me a proof of confidence, to make me forgive you for all you have made me suffer by refusing to see me? Then tell me where you have been this night, where you have been other nights when you have been seen to go out."

"I ought not to tell you," Gloria answered. "Still—if you will let me go I will tell you."

"At such a cost, no."

"Well then, no."

"But if you will not tell me, I will tell you, for I know; my heart has told me this night Gloria, my heart which can never fail for long to know what is going on in yours. It is a sublime unison! If such a correspondence of feeling did not exist, the soul would cease to exist too." And putting his lips to the girl's ear he whispered two or three words which were inaudible even to the night-breeze.

Gloria closed her eyes and a few bright tears sparkled on the lashes.

"Is it true?" asked Morton. Gloria turned even paler than before and folded her hands upon her breast.

"Is it true?" he cried frantically. The girl

sighed softly and breathed a faint 'yes,' like the last word of a passing soul. Then her closed eyes seemed to sink and her lips lost every trace of color. Daniel took her hands and felt them clasp and cling to his with the convulsive grasp of a last farewell. He fancied he felt her pulse dying away, he kissed her forehead and it was cold; in an anguish of terror he called her name.

"Gloria, Gloria!" rang over the solitary country.

But she did not answer; she half opened her eyes, however, and smiled, and her hands clung more tightly than ever to those of the Jew.

"Gloria, oh! Gloria!" he cried again. Her lips tried to form words, but uttered no sound; with a tremendous effort she half raised her eyelids and her dark eyes were fixed on his face with an expression that seemed to say: "Let me see you a moment longer."

For a short space Morton watched her with fearful anxiety.

"It is a fainting-fit," suddenly flashed upon him, and he shouted out:

"Samson, Samson!"

Without the smallest hope of finding assistance, Morton took up his precious load and set out towards Ficóbriga; but Caifás, Sildo and Samson came out to meet him.

“I was sure something bad would come of it,” said Mundideo.

“What has happened, sir?” asked Samson.

“A swoon, to be sure!” said Caifás looking at the senseless girl. “Heaven and earth! and where are we to take her?”

“Home,” said Morton.

“Heaven and the saints!—”

“Let us lose no time,” said the Jew. “Go on; to the Lantiguas’ house. I am afraid of more serious mischief if we do not get help quickly.—You Caifás lead the way—up here.”

They reached the house. The garden-gate was unlocked, in fact, it never was kept locked. A dog began to bark furiously. Caifás began to pray that the earth might open her jaws and swallow him, but Morton, simply absorbed in the necessity of the case, never paused till he reached the door.

“Samson,” he said, “knock.”

The door of the Lantiguas’ house was furnished with a heavy brass knocker which fell on the shining boss of an enormous nail; and as the stalwart Englishman seized it with his great lion’s paw and rapped with as much vigor as his namesake may have put forth when he broke down the gates of Gaza, the furious blows, like cannon shots, shook

the house, through which they echoed as if it had been the very home of the thunder.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN AVOWAL.

SERAFINITA was sleeping calmly, when in her dreams she seemed to see the world rent asunder, at the sound of a celestial hammer which threatened to destroy in a few moments the glorious work of six days, after it had endured for six thousand years. But this picture rapidly passed through that series of transformations and degradations of color, which link a dream with reality. She was terrified, wondered whether to believe her senses which warned her of an earthquake, remembered that on former occasions she had dreamed of cataclysms, fires, and showers of stars which rained in fragments on the earth—but finally her consciousness became alert, and she was wide awake. She heard voices in the house and Francisca, tapping at her door, said in anxious tones:

“Señora get up. Get up at once.”

“Francisca! what is the matter? is the house on fire?”

"No, no; but get up."

"Is the house on fire, woman?"

"No, worse, much worse."

"Merciful Heaven!" cried the good lady, invoking, as was her wont, the Father, Son, Virgin Mary and all the saints. She started up and began to dress, but her legs trembled under her, and her teeth chattered.

"Señora," called Francisca, returning in a few minutes, "are you getting up?"

"Yes, yes; what is the matter?"

"Señorita Gloria."

"Well, what of her?"

Serafinita tried to dress quicker, and calling up all the strength of mind of which she was capable, she succeeded in controlling her fears. She was already half dressed when she heard her brother hurrying down-stairs, and then strange voices in the dining-room.

"That poor child," thought she, "has had a fright, a nightmare, and has roused the household—and yet, strange voices—"

She went out into the passage where she met Francisca coming from the kitchen.

"It is nothing after all," said the maid, "only a fainting-fit. She has come to herself."

Serafinita's astonishment may be imagined

when she saw her niece dressed, as having just come in from a walk, with two men whom she did not know, one of whom, with Don Buenaventura, was assisting Gloria. The virtuous and bewildered lady stood still, speechless and aghast; the words died on her lips, and with one hand out-stretched, her attitude and expression might have been borrowed for the statue of a personification of surprise. Samson was standing by the door, grave and stanch as a sentinel on guard; but at a sign from his master he disappeared.

"It is really nothing," said Don Buenaventura, greatly discomposed and evidently much distressed at his sister's appearance on the scene. "Why did you get up, Serafina?"

"You have been out!" she exclaimed, pointing to her niece in dismay. "You have been out, Gloria!"

"No—" stammered Don Buenaventura. "At least, yes—she has been out, certainly. You see the state she has returned in. The poor child has had a fright."

"And this man—who is he?" asked Serafina, turning to the Jew.

"It is—a, a friend of mine," said Lantigua.

"Daniel Morton," said the stranger with a low bow.

Serafinita trembled as though she felt at one and the same time the fever and the ague of violent illness. Don Buenaventura hastened to support her, fearing that the sudden shock might overwhelm her, and affecting a calmness which he himself was far from feeling, he said:

“My dear sister you are uneasy without cause. Nothing of any importance has occurred. This gentleman happened to be passing—”

“Why not tell the truth?” interrupted Daniel. “I stopped her carriage as she was returning from—”

But at this juncture Gloria, who had fully recovered her consciousness and was crying silently, fell on her knees before her aunt, kissed her hands, and with choking sobs, swallowing her tears as they ran down, she said:

“Señora, my dear, good aunt, I have done wrong; I have sinned against obedience, against submission, I have broken my vows and rebelled against your wishes and commands; but I must claim forgiveness. Grant me forgiveness, for am I not a mother—a mother, and I went to see my child, from whom I am parted, by a just decree—and yet I cannot submit; I cannot submit.”

Gloria’s avowal was followed by an awful silence which seemed to render her words doubly

solemn and impressive; they lingered in the air as if they were graven on the silence itself. Then Don Buenaventura lifted her from her knees and led her to a seat, placing Doña Serafina by her side; the women cried, the two men remained standing in mute consternation.

“I could not resist my longing,” Gloria went on. “I have behaved like a hypocrite, dear mother, like a thief, I stole out in silence, at night when every one was asleep, with a man who is like my slave and who obeys me in everything.— This is the truth, all the truth. I tell you all; for there are times when it seems that my heart is bursting with it and I cannot conceal it, when I long to go out into the street and shout it out to all the world.—I tell you that you may not think me worse than I am, coming in as I came—”

“Compose yourself, my child,” said Serafina tenderly. “I am sure that your impulses are always good and noble. This that you tell me, and which cannot but startle me, this very disobedience has its origin in a lofty instinct, the noblest sentiment of all next to the love of God—yes next to that.”

These words from Doña Serafina were followed by another pause which made them seem, like

Gloria's, more impressive, leaving them, so to speak, engraved on the minds of the hearers.

"For this reason," the lady resumed, holding and caressing her niece's hand, "I will not venture to speak a single word of recrimination. This explains what I heard about your going out at night. Oh! why have you done this? What confusion! However, reproach would be out of place. It was a pure and beautiful impulse that urged you; you need offer me no explanation as to your return in the company of—I am sure, sure that it was through no fault of yours."

Doña Serafina looked at the Jew without either aversion or curiosity, as though rather to implore him to render a strict account of the soul whose perdition he had wrought, than to anathematize him.

"Now you must rest," said Don Buenaventura. "You are very tired my child; let us go upstairs.—Do not sob and cry any more; you must rest."

"This man," said Serafina, pointing to Morton, "there is no need for our offering him hospitality. He has a place of his own where he can pass the night."

"I am quite ready to retire," said Morton, as pale as death. "Still, if you will allow me, Señora,

I should like first to say a few words to your brother."

"Yes, and I also have something to say to you;" said Don Buenaventura. "I will be with you in a moment," and he put his arm round his niece's waist to help her to mount the stairs.

Morton was left alone waiting for the banker, who, ere long returned. The tremendous argument from sentiment on which he had relied, had however been already divulged.

In the hall Roque and Francisca had had a keen dispute with Samson, trying to convince him that it was his duty to retire at once into the street; but he, gesticulating like a wind-mill, since he could not explain himself in words, had given them to understand that so long as his master remained in the house he should not stir out of it. Francisca had then enforced her opinion with shoves and pungent insults; finally they arrived at a compromise; he was neither to go into the street, nor on the other hand, to keep watch and ward over his master in the house; he was to hover between heaven and hell—that is to say, to remain in the garden. And as he went down the few steps from the front door he said in a loud voice, remembering his favorite Proverbs:

“Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a foolish woman.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

PASSION, ATONEMENT, AND DEATH.

“GO to bed,” said Doña Serafina, when they found themselves alone in Gloria’s room, after her uncle had gone down-stairs and Francisca had left them, dismissed by the old lady. “You are tired.”

“Yes, very,” said Gloria faintly, resting her head on her hand and lying down on the bed.

“Then go to bed,” repeated Serafina, unfastening her niece’s cloak. “Come, I will undress you.”

“I have no strength left for anything,” said Gloria, letting her arms drop after sitting up for a minute. “Would you be so good as to call Francisca, I cannot help myself at all.”

“But I am here,” said her aunt, unhooking Gloria’s dress.

“No, aunt, my dear aunt—I can do it,” cried the girl sitting up; but her aunt was on her knees before her with the purpose of taking off her shoes.

“No, indeed, aunt,—for mercy’s sake!” cried Gloria, disclaiming the service with blushes. “You, on your knees before me—you, like a servant.”

“This will show you what is meant by humility,” said Serafina. “What does it matter if I am your servant? We should always think of ourselves as inferior to others. The best way of preserving our humility is to believe that other people are better than we are.”

“No, no, I cannot let you do it.”

“You will really distress me if you refuse to let me wait upon you, dear child. Let me do it. It is my fancy; and you need my help for you are tired, and a hapless unfortunate little person.

“There, between us we can manage it.”

Gloria managed to conquer her fatigue, and at last was resting quietly in her bed, which she had left three hours since. The cocks were now crowing loudly, proclaiming the approach of day.

“Would you like to take anything?”

“No, dear, kind aunt, thank you.”

“Are you sleepy?”

“Not in the least.”

“Am I in your way? Would you rather I should go or stay?”

“That you should never leave me is what I

most wish ; but I do not want you to sit up on my account."

"You like to have me with you?"

"Very much—it is the greatest comfort to me to hear you voice.—I want to talk to you too ; I have so many things to say to you."

"Say them then."

"Oh ! it would be better that I should not. But if you are not very tired, dear aunt, do not leave me alone, for I could not go to sleep, and I should only think of horrible and extravagant things.—I should think of the longing that dragged me out of bed by stealth these three nights, and of the things that trouble and worry me."

"I will stay if you like."

"Sit down here then close to my bed, and scold me well for being so wicked. I ought not to have done as I did—ought I?"

"Perhaps your sin is not so great as you think."

"You think I may be forgiven?"

"Yes, I think so, and I forgive you with all my heart," said Serafinita affectionately, and laying her soft white hand on Gloria's throbbing bosom. "How could you think otherwise ? Have you ever seen cruelty or violence in me or brutal coercion ? Have I ever used any other means than exhortation

and entreaty, and the natural rights of the elder over the young, of parents over children? For you are but a child, a tender plant that it is necessary to train and hold up so that you may never again, for whatever cause, take a wrong bent. The prohibition as to your seeing your baby and the hard sentence that it is to be kept at a distance under the circumstances, are not mine; they emanate from our spiritual father, my saintly brother Angel; and as you know we owe him implicit obedience as the prelate, and respect as our elder brother."

"Yes my uncle is very good, a real saint, and I love him dearly," said Gloria. "Still, in this case—I do not know, but I think his treatment of me and of my poor little helpless baby is not the most generous nor the most humane."

"For pity's sake my sweet child!" cried Doña Serafina anxiously, "for your soul's sake, dear heart, which is in mortal peril, do not say such things. This again is your half-heartedness, your pride and independence of judgment, your perverse criticism of the acts and ideas which emanate from authority. Child of my heart, so long as you do not wholly submit, you will have no peace; so long as you do not renounce this perverse recalcitrancy against the sentence pro-

nounced by your superiors, your spirit will know neither single-minded peace, nor purification, nor the humility which will bring you nearer to God."

"I cannot help it dear, good mother, much as I may try to subjugate my intelligence, to fetter it, scourge it, trample on it—yes I have done it all—but do what I will the result is a failure. All the powers of my will cannot avail to convince me that a helpless child should be taken away from the mother that gave it being, nor that this is not in fact a violation of the most sacred law of nature; no, nor that God can approve of such a cruel decision."

"My child, I admit that as you put it, your view seems perfectly reasonable. It seems a horrible thing to part a child from its mother, to deprive it of the love and care of the parent that bore it—to deprive her of the purest delight and most legitimate anxiety that can exist in the human heart after our love and joy in God. What cruelty! Indeed, put in this way the case seems to afford an instance of the most cruel and pitiless severity."

"It is so," said Gloria. "It seems so."

"I feel for you, I pity you as much as I can pity any living creature," said her aunt, removing

her hand like a protecting divinity withdrawing her protection. "But you talk and think with the baseness and vulgarity of the foolish notions of the ignorant and proud. You do not see into the real meanings of things, because you are not modest and humble in your judgment, because you have not that doubtfulness of the validity of your opinions, which might lead you to understand the loftiest things without difficulty, by the help of the mystic light that shines from Heaven.—Tell me now; did my brother forbid you altogether the pleasures of motherhood? Did he display any aversion or prejudice against the poor infant? Did he not send his blessing to you and to him? Did he not write to you saying that his affection for you was the same as it had previously been, that he forgave you for having erred, that he was moved to pity when he thought of the innocent creature you had brought into the world, and that he felt for it the love of a common humanity?—"

"Yes, true, very true," said Gloria, melting into tears. "I know that my uncle is the best of men—and I love him too—dearly, very dearly—and yet—"

"And yet?—Alas! my poor dear child. I know that my words are like a knife that reopens your wound, still but half-healed, but it is necessary.

No, the mere fact of bringing a child into the world is not enough to give you a full right to all the happiness of being a mother. This hapless infant—to whom we gave the name of Christian, in order that even his name should bear witness to our desire to nurture him for Jesus Christ—this poor little child was not the offspring of parents joined by the sacrament of marriage; he was not born amid the acclamations of a rejoicing family nor the blessings of welcome of our mother Church; he was not born in that halo of honor and gladness which surrounds the heir of an illustrious family; his advent was dreaded, not longed for, and he came as the fulfilment, not of hope, but of terror. You yourself, as you realized this new-born life that is one with yours, trembled with shame and not with anticipation, for what in the due order of nature would have been the sweetest comfort to your soul and the crowning pride of your family and name, is the incarnation of your own disgrace. He was born innocent, yes—with no guilt but the hereditary taint of our race—and worthy to be loved and educated, but he was not born into the sacred fold and under the sacred law of a Christian family. He is the living witness to your miserable fall, of which I do not hesitate to remind you since your greatest

glory now must be to suffer, since in suffering only you can now hope for regeneration. Reflect that your sin is the most monstrous that can be. Never did the devil lay a more atrocious snare! He chose for his victim the sweetest of God's creatures, and for his bait—the son of an accursed race, cursed by God himself, to expiate the crime of deicide by its dispersion and debasement.”

Gloria, who had listened to the beginning of this harangue with speechless anguish, heard the end of it in a perfect agony; her hair seemed on end, her muscles stiffened, her blood stood still—she put out one hand as if to silence her aunt, and the other she pressed to her forehead.

“I distress you too much!” said Serafina. “Then I will be silent, for I do not want to be cruel and uncharitable. Still you, for your part, ought to crave such mortification, to seek suffering, to be anxious to renew your sorrows and clasp the thorns and nails a thousand times to your breast; for it is only by being unwearied in vexation of spirit, by drinking to the dregs the cup of this agony, that you can hope to be saved and regenerate, my dear daughter.”

“Speak on then aunt, I am ready to listen.”

“No; all I have left to say is that, for all these reasons, my brother decided in his wisdom that

this child should be reclaimed for Christ, placed in safety, in security, and with due guarantees that he should never quit the fold of our holy catholic faith."

"In short," said Gloria hotly, "you were afraid that I should be incapable of teaching my own child the faith of Christ."

"You—no; though, indeed, your views are not those best fitted for insuring him truly Christian-teaching. And so long as we do not see that your heart is absolutely divested of all wanton and sentimental vanities—"

"And is it not?" interrupted Gloria eagerly.

"No, my child, no, indeed it is not. I know too well it still contains the leaven of inordinate affection and of those earthly longings, which have led your soul astray and culminated in fearful sorrow to your family. So long as that leaven works we can hope for nothing that shall truly profit your moral advancement."

"If there is any of it left in me," said Gloria, humbly, "I will still strive to subdue it little by little; it is not likely that I can do in a day what the most illustrious saints have only achieved after long patience, abstinence and mortification."

"You are quite right," said her aunt kindly. "Still it is quite certain that the state of your mind

is not that best fitted to induce us to restore your child to your keeping. 'So long as the man who betrayed her lives,' said my brother, 'Gloria will be in danger of falling again into the same snare.' And he not only lives, unhappy girl, but he follows you, seeks you—is here in Ficóbriga, and at night! With respect to your baby, my brother's sentence is very clear. 'You may allow her,' said he, writing from Rome last month, 'some comfort in allowing her to see the poor little creature, still her maternal feelings ought not to be allowed the upper hand. You may grant her now and then this natural and wholesome relief; but if by any chance the *Evil one* should make his appearance in Ficóbriga, you must cut off all communication whatever. Hide our little Christian, whom we are to guard for Heaven; place him where his reprobate father cannot find him, or I greatly fear we shall lose this tender soul, the pious offering of our family to the Lord, who hath shown his power in wounding us, and his mercy in chastising us.'"

Gloria did not answer; she heard the verdict pronounced in dismayed silence.

CHAPTER XIX.

THORNS AND NAILS, SCOURGING AND THE CROSS.

“YOU told me that you had accepted this cross as that of expiation.”

“Yes, I accepted it;” said the hapless girl, after a pause during which Serafina impatiently awaited a reply. “I accepted it—but then, my dear aunt, I felt that I could not submit; I had not the courage. I deceived, cheated, took you in, went out at night after bribing Mundideo to accompany me.—I did wrong, I confess it; but the yearning, the crying of my nature was too strong for me; when I heard its voice I could not control myself, nor be submissive as you say, nor resign myself to suffering, nor take up my cross, nor drive the nails home, nor drain the cup and put on the crown of thorns—”

“My child, my child, every day it causes me fresh alarm and terror to see this feverish excitement which withholds you from perfection. You are not cured, nor can you be, so long as you do not make a supreme effort, a final struggle to attach your sinful soul to God, who is abandoning

you. You are full of strange and wild anxiety and horrible questionings. How far you are from knowing that lovely fruit of the Spirit which we call peace."

"Peace!" cried Gloria in an accent of despair. "Never, never I fear will my soul be again possessed of that."

"You speak like one cast away, my child. Grace is indeed absent from you, and I warn you that the first step towards obtaining it is to wish for it."

"I do wish for it."

"Pray to God fervently, to grant it."

"I do pray for it."

"Then put yourself into an attitude, a frame of mind to deserve it, sacrificing all your affections, all your earthly cravings, all that ties you to this world. Divest yourself of everything, literally everything, and take hold only on God; renounce wholly your own will, convincing yourself that in this life we live as exiles, and that there is nothing under the sun which is not well lost and cast away for the sole and only really good thing, which is God. You must sink yourself in darkness before the Lord will vouchsafe you light; you must humble yourself, deny yourself, annihilate yourself, submit yourself to God with your whole heart be-

fore you can gain true freedom of spirit; live in constant mortification that you may not be tempted, realize that you are vile and contemptible that your misery may work your redemption; give up every desire to learn those things which are hidden from us, and take hold on the highest philosophy and the best wisdom which consist in being humble in your own eyes; wean your heart from the love of things visible and fix it on things invisible."

Doña Serafina spoke with deep emotion and an accent of such utter conviction that it was impossible not to be impressed.

Gloria crossed her hands over her bosom and answered with a clear assertion of her faith:

"I will; I do renounce everything; but I will not pledge myself to renounce my child. As a woman I condemn and despise myself, but as a mother I cannot. I surrender from my heart every affection, every feeling but this which is the breath of life to me. I make an offering to God of all that is within me, but I cannot sacrifice as an acceptable offering my rights and joys as a mother. Are they not noble and sacred, are they not even divine—at least, as nearly divine as the perfection which consists in self-denial?"

"Yes—the feeling is noble, sacred and divine

in itself," said Serafinita. "Who can doubt it? It was as a mother that the woman was blessed above all others who was taken up body and soul into Heaven. The feelings of a mother are pure and sacred above all words; still, unless by the special grace of Heaven, it can never prove as truly elevating as that state of perfection which is inculcated by one of our saintly writers: 'voluntary poverty, perfect chastity, and a life of obedience.' This is the lamp I would hold before your eyes my darling child, and persuade you to follow."

"But my circumstances are exceptional," said Gloria, struggling still,—“I am a mother.” Her voice was full of that oppressed anguish with which in our dreams we wrestle with some monster that we cannot vanquish.

“A mother, yes!” answered Serafina, shaking her head as if she had expected the plea. “Yes! but how? What law, human or divine, has sanctified your motherhood? Gloria, Gloria, for the love of Christ let your mind follow and take in my meaning. I am talking of you as a mother. To what married woman, crowned with the garland of legitimate motherhood, and the joy of a child duly acknowledged by the Church and by society—to what woman I ask should I dare to say: Leave your children, give up your earthly

affections, deny yourself, devote yourself wholly to meditation, abstinence, the single and exclusive love of holy things? Do you think I am mad? It would be absurd, a want of charity, an aberration of religious feeling. But you, who have fallen into disgrace, who are not bound to a husband by sacramental ties, in whom motherhood is a crime as being part of your scandalous and anti-christian love, to you, I say, and will say a thousand times over: "Give up your child, not because your feelings are dead but as an expiation; not as a revolt against nature, but as a punishment. You have committed a great sin—an offence against God. Then offer Him the only atonement possible, sacrifice to Him your one remaining delight—your love for your child. This love is a consolation you say? But you have no right to any consolation—you hope to be redeemed? But without the agony and the cross no redemption is possible. You love this hapless child which ought never to have been born? Then sacrifice your love. A cross you must bear, and a heavy one, for your guilt has been heavy. Then take up this one which God himself has made ready to your hand; take it up and walk on. Your child might, no doubt, make you happy, if you could be happy in any way and

still hope for salvation. If you deserve nothing henceforth but sorrow, why do you cling to this delight? The more noble the feeling in which you take delight, the greater will be the merit of the sacrifice; wherefore it is written: 'Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or father, or children for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.'"

"Oh! how fearful a cross!" cried Gloria, flinging up her arms.

"My child, do not misunderstand me; this is no penalty of my imposing, but simply exhortation and counsel," said Serafina, taking her hands and holding them with tender concern. Do not suppose that I would preach such an unnatural law—no, not I. But the purgatory you must endure must be proportioned to your sin. When you have to carry a heavy cross in order to have Heaven opened to you, you must not look to find it a walking-stick. We do not win Heaven by sacrificing childish joys, vain caprices and trifles—no, we must cut the tenderest chords, snatch out the dearest joy, kill our strongest—our most intimate feeling. Set the plough into the deepest soil, weep seas of tears, suffer, suffer, suffer, and always suffer. This is the note of the Christian, my dearest. You know that in this very day we

celebrate the august and solemn sacrifice of the victim on Calvary, the Divine Lamb. Fix your thoughts on that sublime example, and remember that we too must be crucified to make us like unto Him and fit to enter into His kingdom."

"Crucified! and am I not crucified?" cried Gloria.

"But it is not enough to be crucified only as a woman—you must die as a mother as well. Living as you live, you are open to a thousand dangers, and this mother's love to which you cling is a snare, a cord which binds you unconsciously to the author of your misery. You live open to fearful temptations. Job himself said: 'The life of man on earth is temptation,' and He who knoweth all things has said: 'If thy hand or thy foot cause thee to offend, cut it off and cast it from thee.'"

"True, true."

"My child," said the good old lady kissing the miserable girl. "Put your hand on your heart and question it honestly whether your love for this child and that to which in the first instance it owes its existence, are not inextricably one and the same."

Gloria was silent; she seemed in fact to lay her hand on her heart and study her feelings.

“You cannot answer?”

“I do not know what to say,” said the poor child letting her arms fall in despair. “My soul is in torment, and in my mind all is confusion and dismay. I do not know what I feel, or what I think; I am full of terrors, horrible presentiments, miserable longing—I cannot form any final resolution, for every effort of mind brings me to a state of despair that is killing me!”

“But I offer you the means of escape from this condition, and you refuse them. I show you that the love of God, and of God alone, is the restful issue out of all your torments and still you hesitate.—Blot out all baser affections, and grace will flow into you in a stream. Turn your eyes from all living creatures and you will see the face of the Creator. Tear yourself from all living ties and you will be one eternally with the Creator. Close your ears to the deceitful music of temporary affections, and you will hear in your spirit the still small voice of the Lord. Blessed are the ears which hearken not to the voice of the world, but to the truth which grows up inwardly! No one can give you counsel with a better grace than I, because you cannot suspect me of self-interest. I have made a vow of poverty and divided my fortune among the poor, and my brother’s children. Wholly sun-

dered from the joys of earth, I was about to enter a cloister myself, when I heard of your misfortunes; this stopped me, and in my conscience I heard the tender call of God saying: 'Go, save her for me.' You know, child of my heart, I flew to your side and helped you in your need as the tenderest mother might have done; but my pride would not rest satisfied with saving you from physical death, I must snatch you from the spiritual death and eternal damnation. I exhorted you, reminded you of a hundred edifying examples, we wept together, I treated you with the utmost gentleness, with the tenderest affection, without either severity or haughtiness, for in Christian combats humility wins the day. I could not bear that your soul should burn in eternal fires for a transient aberration, and I persevered in my exhortations, did my very utmost. So long as I have a tongue to speak with I will never cease to say to you: 'Come, come with me to that peaceful and solitary retreat where your soul may be purified by prayer, by humiliation, by penance, where you may receive regenerating grace as though it were a sacred ablution. There your heart may be purged of this dark dross by the fire of divine love, which will spread and grow till you feel that glowing ecstasy and glorious foretaste of the Kingdom of Heaven, which are

vouchsafed to none but those who give up everything for the Bridegroom, and dedicate to him everything that is spiritual and divine in our human nature."

"A convent!" cried Gloria, writhing as she lay. "I do not dread the cloister—but I should not see my child, my baby."

"The Lord who made the world, who became man to redeem us, who died for love of us, ought to be first in our affections my child," said Serafina weeping bitter tears of sympathy and pity. "Is it possible that you are not by any means to be persuaded of this?"

Gloria closed her eyes, and answered between her teeth, in a low hollow voice that hardly parted her lips, like one sunk in mortal lethargy.

"By no means."

"Hapless wretch that I am, a miserable wretch!" exclaimed her aunt in despair. "Why have I neither strength nor eloquence to save a soul so dear to me!"

"You are a sweet saint," said Gloria, opening her eyes and drawing her aunt towards her for a close embrace.

"I am a miserable woman who dared to hope to minister as an Apostle, and God is chastising me for my presumption."

“You are a saint,” repeated Gloria, “but you have never been a mother.”

The worthy lady did not reply; she noticed a strange spasm in her niece’s face.

“What ails you?” she asked.

“Something—which would be longing for death,” said Gloria dully, “if it were not that my baby would still live.”

“Are you sleepy?”

“It is the shadow of death—but that too is sleep.”

“You ought to rest.”

“I cannot—do not leave me. If you go away I shall think of wicked things.—What is the time?”

“It is almost day—Holy Thursday, my daughter. The day of all others on which to be saved.”

Gloria tried to speak, but the painful spasm overcame her; her oppressed heart beat violently producing such difficulty of breathing that Serafina drew aside the coverlet that the weight might not add to it; the poor child tossed with feverish uneasiness and her pretty head, with the dark hair all undone, was thrown back on the pillow. At last, pressing her hands on her bosom as if to clasp something that threatened to escape her, she cried out in husky tones:

“O Lord, O Lord! I cannot bear it.”

Serafina succeeded in soothing her, and she fell at last into a sort of stupor. Her aunt saw that her temples throbbed violently and her breathing was still difficult; this however was succeeded by a lethargy which tranquillized the good lady's anxiety, and kneeling down by the bed, she began to pray with eager and thankful devotion.

CHAPTER XX.

WHAT SHALL I DO?

DANIEL MORTON and Don Buenaventura had meanwhile held a long conversation. It was still night and very dark when Morton left the house; the moon, not choosing to wait for the sun, had sunk with her face turned over her shoulder, as it were, like a coquette who flies from her lover, but still gazes to see if he is following. Samson joined his master, who desired him to go home and to leave him to himself.

Samson, pretending to obey, followed him at a distance; Morton went round the Lantiguas' house and then, taking the street to the sea-shore, went slowly down the hill, his hands folded behind

his back and his eyes fixed on the ground, excepting when from time to time he raised his head to gaze at the dark immensity of cloudy sky on the not less dark expanse of the sea, whose monotonous bass grew louder as he approached the shore.

When his feet sank in the sand and he had advanced to the firmer wet tract which had been scoured by the hissing sheets of the last retreating wave, an unaccountable sense of confidence came over him, a longing for expansion and utterance like what we feel in the presence of a trusted friend. Morton watched the waves rolling on and retreating with that solemn rhythm which is like the sublime pulse of creation; and as he gazed, from the chaos of his spirit the question formed itself: "What shall I do?"

On the sand there lay a stone which seemed to have been uprooted by the waves from the neighboring coast; on this Daniel seated himself, contemplating the sad waters and feeling their cadence, like a great pendulum regulating some mysterious balance. And in its vague perspective, in its tones, subdued by their confusion—like that of a brain in which ideas rapidly surge up and chase each other—in the sighing of the surges and the pulsation of this great vitality flowing incessantly to and from the shore, Morton saw the perfect image and

symbol of the perplexity that tormented his soul.

At a short distance to the right, among the rocks, were still to be seen a few skeleton-like remains of the Plantagenet which was slowly disappearing without exciting any heed in either men or fishes.

He sat down on the stone; his elbow resting on his knee and his beard on his hand; motionless as a sphinx—like a sentinel posted at the gate of infinity—his eyes fixed on the vacancy before him, and with the blank eyes of the sea fixed upon him—for its waves have a physiognomy; they speak, they welcome us or mock us, revile us and spit upon us, they dimple into smiles or storm and rage, sleep or war with anger—and gazing at them, as at the embodiment of the overwhelming riddle of the whole world, Daniel Morton spoke aloud:

“What I feared is the truth; she will die for my sake and will die of grief. She cannot resign herself to the final issue proposed to her by her family because she still hopes—and if she loses that hope she will sink, she will fall into that horrible snare, and inspired by a religion which prescribes suffering, she will bow at last to its ascetic rule and linger out a wretched life in a Christian convent.

With the best intentions, since their religious zeal and enthusiasm for their false doctrine are perfectly sincere, this noble lady and Don Angel, the apostle of the Nazarene, have bereft her heart of the sweetest comfort it could have found, and have parted her from her child.—It is horrible to think of! every fibre of my heart cries out in protest.

“And to think that with a single word I could save her from this hell, and restore her to peace, health, happiness, the countenance of the world she lives in; with one word, could restore to her arms the poor innocent little angel, the child that now lives ignored and outcast and hidden away as a disgrace, or like a stolen treasure!—To think that with one word I could procure her all this happiness and that I cannot say it—but I will! I must have a heart of stone, be less than human, if I do not say the word! I am a wretch, I deserve eternal pangs of conscience and never to have a single day of peace if I consent to her misery—the poor mother heart-broken, and our child hidden from her and entrusted to the care of mercenary hands—”

He paused—his mind, with a sudden revulsion, was looking at the other side—then he went on again :

“But what is it that I have to do? What is

the word that must be said? That word is apostasy, the denial of my religion, and contempt of the God in whose holy unity I have grown up and my parents before me, and before them my forefathers, generation beyond generation, as far back as those who were chosen by God himself to receive the law directly from him and to teach it to all the world. Can I ever, for an instant, admit the idea of renouncing my God and embracing another faith? And what faith! that of the false prophet, the Nazarene in whose name we have been dispersed, persecuted, burnt and insulted for eighteen centuries!—Shall I go to the Nazarene and say: ‘Behold me at thy feet—I who have boasted that I would never be thine, who have striven to incite my nation to rise, and fall upon thee—behold it is I, the fiercest of thy foes!’ Shall I turn against the Lord Jehovah and say: ‘I am thine no more!’ I am like a dishonest servant whose master has honored him by trusting him with everything, and behold the ungrateful wretch deserts his master’s house, having robbed him first, and takes refuge in the enemy’s and is paid to mock his former master.—And all for what? For a woman. For a love, a devotion which is overwhelming and irresistible, though it is but an earthly one—for a child that I love

passionately, though it is but a worm, unworthy to be thought of in comparison with the sublime and stupendous glory of Him who hath made heaven and earth."—But at this stage the leaf was as suddenly turned as before, and the former page lay open again.

"Still as I remember all my darling's suffering and misery, I realize too that I am the cause of them. I alone am answerable for her pitiable position. She was pure and happy, I ruined her peace of mind and dragged her into the gulf; I snatched her spirit from the sweet paradise in which it dwelt and sank it in darkness; I chased from her side the guardian angels whose mysterious care watched over her, and filled their place with serpents. She was a flower and I trod it down. She was born so fair that her mere glance shed happiness; under her very shadow goodness sprang up as she passed, and this bright star I have turned to darkness, to the blackness of a night full of sorrows, which brings tears to the eyes of all who see it.—The guilt is mine, all mine, I wrought her woe, basely, meanly—for I concealed my religion which stood between us, and called myself a friend when in fact I was a foe. I am the author of her misfortunes, and there is no alternative—no sophistry can hide the truth—it

is my part to repair that misfortune. If I do not do it I have no sense of justice, no sense of duty or of honor—and if I know not the meaning of justice, how can I have any conception of God.—It is my first duty to redeem her from misery and release her from the stake. It is not her relations who are burning her alive, it is I and I alone, and it must be my duty to save her. Justice requires it—that is, God. Duty requires it—that is, God. Truth and mercy—that is, God. And society too demands it, and that law of common humanity which we cannot ignore. Yes—it must be, it is indispensable, inevitable, and if I try to avoid it there is no name bad enough in any earthly language to qualify my conduct. I shall deserve to die and be eaten by dogs, nor ever enjoy the rest of the grave.—Nothing can destroy this utter conviction which is rooted in the very depths of my soul. This is the witness, the pure truth—” At this moment the rising tide flung a wave rather higher than before, and its broad, foaming tongue ran up the sand, wetting the dreamer’s feet. He rose and retired up the slope, there, once more seating himself, he went on with his reflections:

“No, God and justice cannot stand in antagonism. It cannot be that fidelity to the impulses of

one's heart should involve apostasy. Here is something beyond the powers of my intelligence to solve; but there must be surely some mysterious and unknown issue which I must seek and grasp, for some solution I must find; this preposterous dilemma cannot continue. O Lord! give me light, show me the issue from this hideous labyrinth; show me a chink, a crevice, for some light or issue I must have. If I find none, O Sovereign Lord! I must renounce all, beginning with Thee—and that I cannot, dare not do.

“But, after all what is in fact my religious creed? What do I think, what do I believe? What do I see in the secret depths of my conscience, what does its stillest whispers say—whispers that are less than a voice and which I myself can scarcely hear. What do I believe? That my religion is the only one by which men can be saved, the only one that contains eternal truth? No, thank God! I can lift my soul up above all forms of worship and can see my Lord, the only God, great and terrible but loving; the great Ruler and Law-giver with his hand outspread over all human souls, and throned with a smile of infinite mercy in the centre of all created things. Wretch that I am then, what is there to make me hesitate? Are not eternal truths to be found in Christianity

also? They are to be found—yes, but disfigured and debased. No, I cannot stoop to temporize with useless superfluities, with the loss of all simplicity, with a creed which, though it gave the world nothing, is radically false. I detest the mere idea with all the strength of my nature, and return the loathing and hatred of these Christians a hundred-fold. I cannot help it, I sucked it with my mother's milk, and it has been burning in my bowels ever since. I was born in it, and it has been stamped on my soul from my cradle. When my spirit flies up to contemplate the Great First Cause, I am tolerant, liberal, sympathetic and generous; but when I turn my thoughts to Christianity—our rack and scaffold—I become a fanatic, yes—and I cannot help being as brutal a fanatic as the Christians of the inquisition—and to crown my torment, the being I love and worship on earth is the child of this hated sect; she comes before me, full of grace and light, the one only being I can divest of the taint of Christianity, or forgive for the cruelties heaped upon my race. O Lord God! what a mystery is this, what a terrible and appalling puzzle? My head rages like a volcano—I do not know what to think. There is something more here than my finite reason can grasp. God of my fathers! God of all wisdom! why hast

Thou allowed these horrible antagonisms, these monstrous absurdities, which make us doubt the mercy of creation and the logic of the universe?"

The sky was beginning to grow light, out on the horizon the sea shone with a reflection of pale gold, and the world was becoming aware of the day. But Morton did not heed it; night and chaos wholly possessed his mind.

"It would be better," he thought, "that everything should go on as it is—that she should endure her disgrace and the barbarous separation of mother and child—that I should bear my isolation and the inexorable remorse that gnaws at my vitals. Time perhaps will bring comfort to us all.—She will enter that hated convent, more dismal than the tomb, since those who are buried in it are still alive.—I shall never see her nor my child, for it will be stolen and hidden from me as a jewel is hidden from a thief. He will grow up and some day I shall see him and not know him.—They will teach him to loathe my name and nation.—How is this to be avoided? How can we escape? If I could prevent it with my life!—but no, a hundred lives would not suffice; and a word would—a single word such as our lips utter every minute, but which would include an idea—nay, all my ideas, the whole universe, all time." Again

he paused but presently added: "If I do not say that word I am a wretch, a villain—if I do not say it clearly, honestly, without reserve. Every fibre of feeling and pity calls upon me to do it and insists on being heard; I am a contemptible recreant if I do not speak that word, shutting my eyes to everything—to my history, my race, my worship, my family, and throwing myself into the arms of the sect I abominate—though no doubt they are not so bad as I think, since the queen of my heart is one of them!"

He clasped his forehead in his hands as if he were trying to lay hold of some idea which was escaping him, or to stay the wild whirling of his brain, but he could not evade the overwhelming reflection:

"My father!—no, if I decide on this step I renounce father, mother, friends. I cannot think of their grief or their bereavement. They will mourn for the renegade as for a son who is dead—the renegade is looked upon as one who has never been, he is blotted out. The idea of my mother, who is the very personification of the continuity of our race, overcomes me more than a thousand irrefragable arguments.—My mother! from whose arms I tore myself in silence to come here—my mother, who would have followed me to detain me

—the woman who worships me as the pride of her nation and who will certainly die when she learns! —No, no, it cannot be, it shall not be. It is impossible—it is as if I were told to drink the sea dry—as if I bid the tide never to rise again.—O Lord God! why didst Thou create me to live to see this hour?”

He threw up his arms in the frenzy of despair and looking to the sky, he cried out wildly: “O Lord the Maker! I say this work is not good.”

Day was by this time far advanced without his having noticed its progress; the smiling morning hours came dancing on, shedding light and joy over the fields and reanimating the dewy pastures. The day was as bright and sweet as if Nature, conscious of the deed of Redemption, wished to join in doing it honor; the breeze which stirred the trees, the clouds which swept across the sky in a gorgeous train each holding the hand, as it were, of the last, the sounding waves, and the flowers which everywhere turned their innocent faces to the kisses of the sun—all seemed prepared to keep the high festival.

Morton went down to the shore again and slowly paced the sand; he seemed to be counting the grains; then he flung himself down and gazed at the ebbing tide, as it seemed to draw in its

sweeping wreaths of foam. His torment had not ceased, and the great ocean rhythm kept up its tormenting swing—at last however, about noon he rose. He struck his hand against his forehead, and fixing his eye with the steady look of a man who has made up his mind, he said :

“At last, at last, I know what I ought to do.”

CHAPTER XXI.

HOLY THURSDAY.

GLORIA opened her eyes after a prolonged stupor during which her overwrought spirit gained some rest. She had dreamed of the crucifixion, of the horrible judges who had Him scourged, had beheld the whole scene with the acute vividness of a dream, and her soul was full of pity and remorse ; and then, as she opened her eyes, she saw her aunt lighting some tapers before the crucifix—a fine marble figure representing Christ at the moment of death when, raising his dying eyes to Heaven, he says : “Forgive them for they know not what they do.”

Serafinita had set out a table as an altar, with costly tapers such as the nuns of various convents

make and decorate so well. She had placed no flowers in the jars, for fear their perfume might be injurious to Gloria, but had filled them with pine-branches and other scentless greenery.

“How nice, how pretty that is!” said Gloria contemplating it with pleasure.

“Well, my child, and how do you feel?”

“Not very well, but I can get up.”

“You had far better stay in bed. I did not mean to go out to-day, not even to church, although it is such a great day. I must keep you company, my dearest, and together we will read the offices for the day, which are sublimely beautiful.”

“That is a good idea, we will do so.”

“And delight our minds by meditating on the love of Him who, being God, condescended to shed his blood for us.”

After Gloria had gone through her morning prayers she got up, and after dressing lay down again on the bed to rest; Francisca arranged her room, while Doña Serafina went down-stairs to prepare something for the invalid to eat for breakfast. Nothing could be more admirable than the unwearied zeal this excellent lady brought to bear on everything, even on the veriest trifles. She did everything by rule of conscience and never ex-

cused herself from anything, nor neglected anything she thought right or due from her. She was the very soul of rectitude, and if she had condemned the whole human race God would have forgiven her; for she would certainly have done it from conviction, and in the belief that she was doing right. Not a shadow of hypocrisy had ever existed in her. Her spirit, her belief and her desires were embodied in her actions; a clearer conscience never existed, and she was incapable of mental reserve or insidious distinctions. Nevertheless, a soul as pure of evil even as hers may work to evil issues.—But to judge and condemn Serafina, God himself would have to revise the decalogue and promulgate an eleventh commandment to say: “Thou shalt not take a distorted view of loving Me.” And if men are to judge and condemn her, many saints would have to be torn from their altars who, if they were like Serafina, might claim to remain there.

She stood preparing her niece's breakfast while she herself was almost sinking with weakness from long fasting; still the pious energy of her will overcame her weakness of body and inspired her with the power of endurance, and by her total abnegation of the flesh, the spirit shone out triumphant and ready for every Christian effort which

might require self-denial.—Alas! and what a pity that such sweet saintliness was not more humanly pitiful!

When Gloria had breakfasted, the doctor came and prescribed the most complete repose and the absence of every form of agitation. Serafinita begged the girl to walk about the house a little, which she was most willing to do, admiring the lovely morning from the balcony.

“What a perfect day!” she exclaimed. “On a day like this it is impossible not to feel that some great event ought to take place.”

“It is full of the sacred memories which the Church this day keeps holy,” said Serafina. “Does it not seem to you that Nature is doing a sort of solemn homage—offering a grave and beautiful acknowledgement? This day we celebrate death and life; the bodily death of Him who died to give us spiritual life.—I will read to you.”

Serafina placed herself close to the improvised altar, and putting on her spectacles, which her wearied eyes found indispensable, she began her reading while Gloria sank on a sofa near the balcony. She began with the services called “The Lamentations,” sung by the Church on the Wednesday evening in Holy-week, and then went on to the 69th Psalm: “Save me, O God! for the waters

are come in unto my soul." The two women were absorbed in the grandeur of this magnificent lament and presently, when Serafina was evidently becoming fatigued, Gloria begged to be allowed to take the book. The two women read the whole service in turns, and towards the end it was Serafinita's part to read the epistle with the history of the Institution of the Lord's Supper.

And having read this she said: "This, my child, always seems to me the most interesting, pathetic and solemn feature of our doctrine. Does not your heart warm and feel touched in contemplating the infinite love of the victim on Calvary? Does it not throw light on the problem of your life and the issue that I propose to you? Does not your heart second the suggestion which your social predicament and the course of events proclaim to you? I see it so plainly, my daughter, that I cannot understand how you can doubt."

Gloria, sitting with her eyes cast down and her fingers parting the fringe of the shawl she had thrown over her shoulders, said nothing.

"In your position I can see no other course," Serafina went on. "Events would have to change enormously for the logic of your future life to be changed. The infidel would have to open his eyes to the light of Christianity, a conversion would

have to take place such as have from time to time shaken the world—and this is more than difficult, if not actually impossible. Tell me, do you believe it to be possible? Do you give credit to the reports you have heard?”

“No,” said Gloria shortly.

“Do you believe that he will enter our Church? Oh! if that were to take place, I would acknowledge in it the hand of God, and be the first to say to you: ‘Marry—you ought to marry; the Lord points out the way.’ Your love would be legitimized by the glorious fact of your bringing a sheep into the fold who, though he comes late, would not be rejected. Still, it is true, you could not then aspire to the most perfect Christian life, which consists in the total negation of all human affections; however, you might very nearly rise to it by other means.—But you have nothing to look for in this direction, my child; you yourself told me that you have no hope.”

“It is true,” murmured Gloria; “I have none.”

“But you ought to hope,” said her aunt.

Gloria looked up and gazed at her aunt in the utmost astonishment.

“Yes you ought to hope,” Serafina repeated with much decision.

“Hope for what?”

“Not for marriage—no,” said Serafina, with what she felt as a gush of apostolic inspiration more fervent than ever, “not for marriage, but to gain this Jew to our holy faith.”

“How?”

“By means of prayer added to self-sacrifice.”

“I do not perfectly understand you, aunt,” said Gloria, showing however an eager interest in the subject.

“By prayer,” repeated the good lady enthusiastically; “and better still by sacrifice. Must I explain myself more clearly?”

“No, I believe I see your meaning.”

“If you offer to God that immense and painful sacrifice which I have suggested to you as the best means of saving your soul, if you dedicate yourself wholly to him, tearing yourself from the world and from all earthly affections—if you do this Gloria, my darling child, and ask God to grant you the salvation of a soul, blind as yet to the light of the gospel, how can God deny it you?”

“Oh! if this were indeed true!” cried Gloria, melting into tears. “And it seems as though it might be true, as though it might happen as you say—” Serafina’s countenance was radiant with a gleam of supreme joy, the glow of apostolic triumph.

“ Ah ! ”—she exclaimed clasping her hands on her bosom.—“ I am profoundly convinced of it.—My heart seems to open like a deep gulf full of voices and they cry to you that this man shall be saved by your mediation.”

“ Holy Virgin ! ” exclaimed Gloria, almost as much excited as her aunt. “ I have prayed so much—so much—that by this time—”

“ No, miserable girl, prayer is not enough. Sacrifice is also necessary ; you must come and lay your broken heart before these feet pierced by the nail—lay down your will, your actions, your future, all that constitutes the world to you, your flesh and spirit, and say : ‘ Lord take back all, all that Thou hast bestowed. I am wholly Thine, and even so, I feel I do not offer half enough to Thee who didst die to redeem me.’ ” Doña Serafina had risen to her feet and her majestic gravity added weight to her words.

“ What you say echoes in my soul like a note from the skies,” cried Gloria.

“ God will accept your sacrifice and reward it,” Serafina went on. “ The Lamb will soon reveal to you the inexhaustible sources of His love. You will hear His voice in your inmost soul, you will see Him in the obscurest depths of your inmost vision, when you close your eyes in ineffable

prayer. How should He fail to grant you what you ask, if what you ask is a triumph for his holy Church? What greater reward can be desired by a soul consecrated to God? 'Lord,' you will say, 'take to Thyself a soul that was dear to me and which is so unhappy as not to see the true light!'"

"And He will hear me!" exclaimed Gloria, crossing her hands. "Yes my dear aunt, my spirit seems suddenly full of faith; a glorious light has dawned upon me—it floods my soul like rain.—I am changed—a voice like thunder echoes through me as though God himself were saying: 'Yes, yes, yes.'"

"Yes, yes, yes!" cried Serafinita, excited almost to ecstasy. "And he will be saved, he will abjure his horrible religion and dwell in Paradise."

The pious lady who, for so many months had been preaching to her niece all the beauty of the ascetic life; who had exhausted all the arguments, reasons and subtleties she could command, without advancing a step, had at last gained her point—but how? By touching the tenderest fibre of her niece's heart, that of human affection. As she touched it the rebellious spirit groaned in anguish, but succumbed; that which had till then seemed monstrous and iniquitous now looked beautiful,

sublime, noble and advantageous. Wrung to her very heart's core she felt the rapturous expansion of love, and with it the natural result, self-sacrifice.

"I am ready, I am ready!" she exclaimed rising—brisk, restless, excited, as if she were endowed with miraculous vigor. Still, putting out her right arm and covering her eyes with her left hand, she sighed out with a sudden pang of dismay:

"My poor baby!"

"God, the creator of us all," cried Serafina hastening to recapture the victim that was escaping her, "saw the world destroyed by sin and sending down His Son in mortal form could see Him suffer and die like a man.—And that which God did, to redeem mankind whom he had formed of clay, can one of his miserable creatures not do, to save a fellow-man from the everlasting flames of hell? God himself, infinite and omnipotent could see His Son actually die—and you? Will you lose yours, kill yours?"

"My dearest mother!" exclaimed the girl returning her aunt's affectionate embrace with equal warmth and fervor. "I am yours; I will waver no more. My will is gone, welcome the cross now, soon! Oh! how grand, how sublime a thought!" and she sank breathless on a chair.

Serafina did not sit down; she still stood as she said :

“Let us go this very evening; we ought to lose no time.”

“This very evening,” repeated Gloria, pale, helpless, her whole face changed as though she had already heard the hour strike of exit from the world.

“We can get ready in a few minutes. We will arrange to take the train at Villamojada.”

“We can go out without my uncle’s knowing it.”

“Nay, that need not be, we will tell him. Why a deception which is unworthy of us? We must prepare everything at once,” said her aunt with feverish impatience. “It is true we shall not need much.”

“That is true—I—” but Gloria did not finish her sentence for they heard footsteps approaching; the door opened and Don Buenaventura came into the room.

CHAPTER XXII.

A HOPE OF SALVATION.

“I HAVE come,” said the worthy gentleman with some agitation, “to announce a visitor to you Gloria, and you cannot now refuse to receive him, for the occasion of his coming is a most important, a most serious, a most interesting one. In short, he is here, and he is coming up to see you, for I begged him to do so.—It is a question of life and death.”

Gloria could not answer a word, so astonished and so startled was she; Doña Serafina was on the point of speaking, but her brother withdrew too quickly to give her the opportunity. There was no time to make any commentaries on the visit and this mysterious announcement, for in a few moments Don Buenaventura returned, accompanied by Daniel Morton dressed entirely in black, handsome and profoundly grave. He looked as if he had just recovered from a severe illness, or as if in one night he had lived through ten years. Gloria as she saw him was so overwhelmed with thorough discomposure that she sat as if she

was dead. Her mind was so utterly unhinged, that she thought she was dreaming or under some hallucination of delirium, when she heard her uncle pronounce these words :

“My dear Gloria, my dear sister, I have the greatest pleasure in announcing to you both that our holy religion has achieved a great triumph. Señor Morton—who stands here—embraces Catholicism.”

The effect of this speech was stunning—tremendous as the voice of God in the cloud.—Gloria and her aunt stood like two statues.

“What my illustrious friend says is the truth,” said Daniel. “And in determining on this step I have thought it my duty to announce it to her who may boast of being the instrument of my conversion.”

Nothing, it is true, can be more the cause of glory and rejoicing to the Christian than the admission of an infidel to the kingdom of Christ; and yet Serafinita—who was, as we know, a candidate for the palm of Christian perfection—in the first moment of receiving this announcement felt nothing but keen annoyance. This annoyance, it is but fair to add, passed like a flash of lightning, for the upright spirit which dwelt in her worthy soul and occupied all of its chambers that were

not filled with the afflatus of mysticism, at once restored the dominion of her better sense—or, as she would have said, in the words of the evangelist, of that true light which shines on all who come into the world. Still, though doing full justice to the occasion, there lingered in the lady's soul something which was not the unqualified jubilation of the Church triumphant. We might formulate her state of mind, though somewhat paradoxically, by saying that she was resigned to be glad over the salvation of the Jew; and this strange mixture of feeling took the more definite form of pity for her niece and for the precious soul, already called to enjoy the supreme delights of the realms of perfection, which was now to be turned aside from that goal.

“My dear daughter,” Don Buenaventura went on, putting his arm round Gloria, “God has at length heard your prayers, and you will now be restored to happiness, peace and dignity by the most simple and creditable course. It is the happiest issue, and the greatest compliment both to you and your family.”

“It is my desire,” said Morton turning to Gloria, “that no one should take any credit for my determination but you yourself.”

“And I,” she answered eagerly, “would rather that so noble a course of conduct should be con-

sidered as due to the holy doctrines of the Christian faith than to me."

Serafinita hastened to take up her parable, saying:

"We do not doubt that the sublime statement, 'I am a Christian,' has been said in perfect good faith; we do not believe that the sacred name of Christ can be uttered by the lips while the heart denies him—still, this gentleman will hardly wonder at our demanding some guarantee of his sincerity. To enter the Church he must first receive some Christian teaching and be baptized with water."

"I know what steps I shall be required to take," replied Morton, "and am ready to take them."

"This is such an extraordinary event," said Gloria greatly agitated, "so un hoped for, so startling, that I can hardly believe it.—You! a worshipper of Christ!—Turn your eyes to that cross and swear by the crucified Saviour that what you say is the truth, that you speak in the firm determination of being truly a Christian and not from narrower and baser motives, that you will persist in your pious resolution and that you sincerely believe that the doctrines of our Lord Jesus Christ are not merely the best but the only truth."

Daniel, as he raised his hand towards the crucifix, was as pale as the beautiful marble face that he so curiously resembled; his eyes were fixed on the ground as he spoke:

“What I have said I say now. By Him—I swear to you that my resolution is firm and immovable.”

But he looked more like a convicted criminal, whose confession is wrung from a tortured conscience, than a fervent neophyte acknowledging his newly-found God. At the instant when he spoke a harsh, strident, jarring sound was heard in the outer air. It was not the clang of a bell, nor the rattle of wheels, nor the screech of a rusty hinge, but a hollow clatter of boards and stones; it was as if the air were full of creatures wearing wooden shoes and dancing on a stone pavement.

“They are sounding the *carraca**,” said Don Buenaventura. “The procession is coming out.—With regard to the steps which you must take to carry out your determination, my brother Angel will decide what they must be; do you not think so Serafina? I had a letter only yesterday from him, in which he says that if this conversion could take place, he would arrange everything in such a

* The Carraca, known in Italian as the Tabella, is a clapper of wood with iron tongues used in Holy-week instead of bells, which are prohibited in that season.

way that in three days baptism might be administered and my niece happily married, in the peace and grace of God. The exceptional character of the case would justify him in abridging certain usual formalities, and when my brother thinks so it is certainly allowed by the Church. For the present," he added, turning to Gloria, "I believe we may take his word."

"We will take his word, yes,—” answered Gloria with a tender look at the stranger. "And I am so full of satisfaction at the thought, the joy I feel is so supreme—not for my own reinstatement but for your conversion—that I long to hear you declare: ‘I believe in God the Three in One, I believe in Jesus Christ!’ I could cry with joy; this makes up for all I have suffered and is the tangible proof that God has not forsaken me.—Worship this cross, kiss this image of Him whom your forefathers insulted, scourged and crucified, and with a word, as brief as you will, but spoken from your heart, prove to me that your noble spirit has indeed seen the Light; that you do not merely confess Christianity but that you are a Christian."

Gloria's dark eyes sparkled with a divine light and her words were so genuinely the utterance of a pure and truthful heart, that it was impossible

but to be fired by their enthusiasm and devotion. Morton—whom we must no longer call the Jew—rose from his seat. His face was as colorless as that of a corpse, and his hands trembled as if he had an ague.

“I believe in God—in your God—the only God,” he exclaimed in the tones of a criminal brought to confession,—“and in—” But he could say no more; his arm dropped by his side as if he were dying, and sinking his head on his breast, he sighed with a groan as deep as that of the agonized Christ, represented in the marble figure before him.

“Forgive me my love—my salvation—” he murmured. “Forgive me, all of you—but I am too little versed in the dogmas of Christianity, and I am afraid I may say something that is tainted by the form of worship which I am giving up.”

Gloria begged him to sit down again; his pallor, his confusion and dismay alarmed her greatly; still, they were sufficiently accounted for by the strangeness of the experience, and the agitation which the presence of the woman he loved was sure to produce in his mind.

A noise came up from the little plaza of people passing and of religious chanting; the proces-

sion of Holy Thursday was coming by, and Serafinita running out on to the balcony fell on her knees. They all followed her example; Gloria and Daniel were side by side at her right hand, Don Buenaventura to her left. Guarded by four officials, who marched in front to clear the way, came the black banner borne aloft by a man, and then the black crucifix with the tapers, and followed by a representation of the first Station—the Prayer in the Garden—and those who carried the cross, the banner, the tapers and the picture, all stared gaping at the Lantiguas' balcony; for there was a thing to be seen, extraordinary, unheard of—the Jew on his knees, watching the procession. And above, to the right stretched the telegraph wire covered with birds all in a row, looking down at it too with such gravity and immovable attention, that they seem to be equally absorbed in devotion.

In the distance the chords of a funeral march were audible, twanged out by the ruthless trombones and cornets of the town band; and a great crowd of the people came steadily pouring in from the main street. Above the bared heads waved the boughs of olive, figuring the scene of the first Station, the floating robe of velvet bordered with gold, the ferocious Jews with their

scourges, and behind them all a woman dressed in black, and a canopy, also black. The group went by and then, two and two, came the most numerous fraternity of the town, each with a taper in his hand—and not one failed to take his eyes and his thoughts from the doleful emblems of the Passion and to turn them on the house of the Lantiguas. In front of the long line of brethren walked the group of the scourgers, and even these grim actors in the scene gazed up at the balcony, and relaxed in their impious efforts. Round them walked a great many women, some wrapped in black cloaks with hoods, others more humbly dressed in shawls; ladies and peasant women, mistresses and maids, young girls and old crones, all with eyes reddened with crying—but each and all as they reached the Plaza found that balcony infinitely more interesting than the Stations of the Cross, and a wave of comments, a surge of muttered words rushed through the tide of human beings.

The second Station was by certain penitents, men who had come in from the neighboring villages to expiate their sins by carrying the enormous and heavy cross. They came slowly by, with it on their shoulders and dressed in the traditional black dress with a hood drawn over the head, concealing every feature that might lead to the rec-

ognition of the wearer, and with no air to breathe but that which was admitted through the two slits which gave light to the eyes of the hapless sinner inside the hideous sheath. But they too, in spite of being stricken with remorse and absorbed in remembrance of the sins they were expiating by physical toil and suffering, turned their ghastly peep-holes to the four kneeling figures in the balcony.

Then came the Christ and last of all the Mater Dolorosa, and round her all the important members of the community.

Women of the better class supported the poles of the canopy which was borne behind the cross as a mark of honor; then came the priests and last of all the town-council, followed by the band and a small company of soldiers, sailors and gentlefolks, the bearers of the dais and of the picture, priests and clerks, Sildo with the censer and Caifás with the bassoon, the singers and the constables, the pompous Alcalde, Don Juan, and the lieutenant of the carbineers, the boys who vigorously shook the *carracas*—in short every soul that passed stared up at that balcony. The curé said a few words in an undertone to padre Poquito, and Amarillo frowned as he looked around at them, indignant that any great event should occur to excite public curiosity without his leave.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TRAVELLERS.

BUT, as if the day were destined to be noteworthy in the town of Ficóbriga by a concurrence of extraordinary and unexpected events, popular attention was soon diverted to another object. For, on turning out of the little Plaza de Lantigua into the high-road, the advanced guard saw a carriage coming and signed to it to stop. The bearers of the banner and the leaders of the first Station cast angry glances at the intruding vehicle which obstructed the road, when at one of the windows appeared the face of a handsome but perfectly unknown lady; and their discontent was becoming audible in murmurs when, out of the opposite window came a red hat and beneath it the serenely smiling and seraphic countenance of Don Angel de Lantigua, Cardinal Archbishop of X * * *. He shouted to the coachman:

“Stop—stop here—do not get in the way of the procession.”

And his Eminence forthwith stepped out of the carriage, accompanied by Dr. Sedeño, and took

off his hat in veneration before the sacred emblems. A tremendous roar burst from the leaders of the procession and propagated itself along the whole line, dying away like the echoes of a thunder-clap before it reached the farther end.—An unanimous shout of: “Long live the Cardinal de Lantigua! Viva!” The people were very near abandoning the Stations half way, in order to ‘chair’ their illustrious fellow townsman and carry him in triumph, for they had not seen him since his elevation to the cardinalate; Don Angel himself was shedding tears of joyful excitement. Still, the enthusiasm of the Ficóbrigans did not prevent each and all noting a very remarkable and singular fact; in his Eminence’s carriage sat two ladies, one of them evidently the superior and extraordinarily handsome, the other an obviously subordinate personage, but not so humble as to look like a servant. They both got out of the carriage after the Cardinal, and stood looking at the procession with more curiosity than sympathy.

Who were they? This was the question each one asked of his neighbor as he passed, and for a long way ahead nothing was talked of but the two ladies whose beauty had graced the Cardinal’s carriage. Don Juan Amarillo cast a look at them, a sort of thunder-bolt of authority, imperative, in-

quisitorial — blasting—but the two women, who were no doubt unversed in reading the looks of an Alcalde, began to laugh. Don Juan calling one of his subordinates, at once fulminated his instructions that he should immediately find out “*what strange birds were these,*” and why they were come, and why they wore hats, and why they laughed, and in short why they drew breath without leave from the town council.

The shouting and welcome with which the Cardinal was hailed had reached the house of the Lantiguas; and as soon as the tumultuous fag-end of the procession had passed and the plaza was clear, Don Buenventura went forth to meet his brother, whom he welcomed and embraced affectionately.

“It is by nothing less than a miracle that I reach you alive,” said Don Angel smiling. “It is a wonder to me that I have all my limbs safe. Indeed, I can hardly believe that my bones are whole now.”

“Was your coach upset?”

“Yes, at that dangerous slope by San Lúcas. You can imagine the disaster. If we did not go straight into the river it was because Heaven is reserving us for our future fate. The carriage we left there, past praying for—two wheels off and a

shaft broken. Happily for us this lady—" and he turned to the two ladies who were standing near, while Don Buenaventura hastened to make his bow to them with the most distinguished and courtly politeness. "This excellent lady," continued the Cardinal, "this kind soul, happening to pass just at the right moment, had the goodness to offer us seats in her carriage, and I ventured to take advantage of her kindness by accepting it. God will reward her.—And what news at home my dear brother?"

The Alcalde's messenger not daring to address the ladies when he saw them hand and glove, so to speak, with the Lantiguas, devoted himself to keeping off the street boys who crowded round the Cardinal, kissing his hand and getting in his way as they walked on.

"There is great news at home," said Don Buenaventura.

"Is any one ill?"

"No, no; all are well. Gloria is a little delicate, too delicate; still she is certain to get better soon; so the doctor says."

"Señora," said his Eminence, turning to his fellow-traveller, "if you are proposing to remain in Ficóbriga, may I beg you to accept the humble hospitality of our house."

“Thank you,” said the lady with polite acknowledgement. “Thank you very much my lord Cardinal.”

“But I must not leave you in ignorance of our great event,” Don Buenaventura went on. “You must know that Daniel Morton is a convert to catholicism.”

Don Angel’s reverend lips were already parted to utter an exclamation of surprise or of joy when the unknown lady came up with them with a step, and said to them: “Gentlemen, if I do not interrupt you—”

“Madam—” the brothers smiled politely, but the lady paused: then she said:

“I would beg you to tell me where my son lodges.”

“And who is your son, Señora?”

“The man you have just named.”

“Daniel—I left him this moment in our house. Do me the honor—”

“Thank you,” said the lady coldly. “Do me the favor to show me where he lives.”

The Cardinal, putting on a very solemn face, made a low bow to the strangers and walked on, limping somewhat, to the Lantiguas’ house, accompanied by Sedeño and followed by the little mob of children; while Don Buenaventura offered to escort

the ladies, and guided them through the streets of the town.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE GOSSIPS IN COMMITTEE.

WHEN Isidorita la del Rebenque beheld this handsome and elegant woman, so grave and so beautifully dressed; when she saw following her another lady, not less handsome, but who was certainly not the maid though she was not the mistress; when, behind the carriage which had brought them to Ficóbriga she saw another vehicle draw up full of luggage; and when the whole cortége—ladies, trunks and all—took up their quarters in her house, a gilded vista, paved with English pounds sterling, dawned upon her fancy. She could not resist the impulse of delight that possessed her, and sent out to invite her intimate gossips to hear the whole history of the adventure and to beg them to lend her various crocks and household chattels.

The remainder of that Thursday was spent in arranging the rooms for the two ladies, whom she did her best to treat with the utmost and minutest

attention—rushing to a dozen places at once to serve them, pointing out the view from the balcony—from which half the Abbey was visible with a part of the cemetery and the flag-staff of the town-hall—imploring them to rest, sending her children to the remotest corner of the house that they might not make a noise, threatening her husband with a stick in her hand, that he should not disturb the foreign ladies with his stupid blundering, arranging their supper, moving the furniture—what not?

As the evening drew in Teresita la Monja dropped in, in a great hurry, puffing and blowing, but none the less copper-colored; and not long after appeared the stout person and sallow features of Doña Romualda, hot and tired with having followed the procession from its start till its close.

“I cannot go to the service to-night,” said Teresita, throwing off her cloak. “I will not stir from this spot till I have learnt what the meaning of all this is.”

“She is the Jew’s mother,” said Romualda. “Everybody knows that—nothing else is talked about. They say she is come to be converted too.”

They were in the dining-room of Isidorita’s

house; the father and the children had been packed off to the evening service that they might not be in the way.

“But those Lantiguas! those Lantiguas! What are they thinking of?” said Teresita. “I wish I could forget the disgraceful scene of this afternoon.”

“I thought I should have died when I saw them side by side on the balcony!” exclaimed Romualda. “Though I hear that he is a convert.”

“A convert!” cried Teresita scornfully. “What a fool you must be! Do you believe such nonsense?—not I. I know from my husband that this conversion is a mere farce devised by old ‘Ventura.’ Nothing more was needed.—This was all she wanted—that ninny of a girl—in order to get married. No, no!—but when some kinds of mischief have been done it has to be paid for. If the wicked were to be let off or rewarded, what a bad example it would be to the good. No one would want to be good then—Eh!”

“The Cardinal has arrived?”

“Yes, he came with the Jewess—what queer things happen! It seems that his Eminence’s carriage broke down on the way.—I say something awful must be going to happen. You, Isidorita,

are the gainer by it, for you get the hard cash which is a blessing from Heaven. But oh! Lord—what am I saying! Those people's money—!"

"Their money is as good as other people's," retorted Isidorita in self-defence. "There is nothing to be said against the Jewess; she is a very elegant lady, and very handsome and pleasant-spoken. You should see her luggage!"

"What a heap of trunks!"

"Large ones?"

"As big as to-day and to-morrow. And you cannot fancy her dresses! the handsomest, the most beautiful things—gowns, hats, jewels, and what loads of them all!"

"Have you seen them?"

"No, for they have not been unpacked—that is to say they have unpacked some—but there must be wonderful things to come. And the lady's companion is very handsome too."

"If only we could see them," said Teresita rising with irrepressible curiosity.

"Do not get me into trouble, Teresa. The mother and son are shut up together in his room. I went by and heard them."

"And what were they saying?"

"Something—but I cannot tell you what, for they they were talking German or English—I do

not know which. Bartolo thought it was English—I did not understand a word.”

“But they were quarrelling?”

“Certainly not; they were talking most affectionately.”

“Then the son came in?”

“Soon after his mother had arrived. The poor fellow looked like a ghost; he had been out all night.”

“Tell me all about it—I heard him go into the Lantiguas’ house before daylight,” exclaimed Teresa eagerly. “And he was carrying that ‘jewel of the Lantiguas’ in his arms; at two in the morning, my dears.—Well, I must say that that family—Good Heavens! what a family!—You hear what I say—Ah ah!—the most noble, immaculate, celestially-pious family of Lantigua, the pride of Ficóbriga!—What a world we live in!”

“Do not talk to me of conversion,” continued the lady. “This morning he went back to the house with Don Buenaventura.”

“When he first came in,” said Isidorita, “after staying out all night, he wrote a long letter; then he went out to post it; came in again, sent a message to Don Buenaventura, who came at once; they sat talking a long time and then they went away together to the Lantiguas’ house.”

“ I know that Gloria was ill this morning, Francisca told me so—the jewel of Ficóbriga had a very red face as she came out into the balcony—naturally enough—as the disgraceful secret of her going out at night to meet the Jew had just been discovered.—And yet if you tell those donkeys, the townsfolk here, that the Lantiguas are not angels come straight down from Heaven!—Well, so far as the men are concerned—I admit there are no politer people in the world, nor richer, nor any saint on any altar to match Don Angel, nor any man so learned as the late Don Juan—”

“ The best thing the girl can do is to go into a convent,” said Romualda with energetic conviction.

“ That is perfectly clear. Go into a convent, leave this place and never let us hear of her again for the rest of our lives.—This girl who is a scandal to the place must leave it.—What an example for the young, for all the tender and innocent girls of this respectable town! My hair stands on end when I hear my nieces discuss the misfortunes of Gloria—and say what a pity it is that Gloria should be so unhappy, how pretty Gloria is, what dresses Gloria wore, how charitable and liberal Gloria is!”

“ It is a scandalous affair no doubt.”

“ And if she marries this convert, do you suppose they will continue to live in Ficóbriga ?”

“ I cannot think so—it surely cannot be enough to reinstate herself merely! Why the whole town would be scandalized, and with reason. Besides, there is more than that—our ‘jewel’ has a child; we all know that—”

“ And where is it ?”

“ In a village near. I have means of verifying it—indeed I have done so already. You see the Lantiguas know how to keep their secrets, that is, when they are ashamed of them; if it is only some act of charity, they can get them betrayed and well talked about. Why the very newspapers at Madrid get wind of them. We know very well that it is Don Silvestre who sends these details to the metropolitan journals. I wonder why he did not write to say that on such a night of such a month the Señorita Doña Gloria de Lantigua, *alias* ‘the pearl of Ficóbriga,’ niece of his Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop, had a son whose father is a Jew, saved from shipwreck near Ficóbriga, and taken into the house of the Lantiguas for the edification of Christians !”

Her two friends laughed loudly, and the gossip went on. Their tongues were three knives and they were indefatigable in using them. They

were eagerly discussing their choice dish of scandal, when Samson came into the room and told the mistress of the house that the 'Señora Morton' wished to speak to her. Isidorita rose with officious haste, threw off her kitchen apron to make herself presentable, and found the mother, the son and the younger lady seated round a table strewn with English newspapers. Daniel's demeanor was very quiet and his face still showed traces of suffering and grief; his mother, on the other hand, looked perfectly content with the fact of her son's presence, and sat watching him with affectionate interest. The lady companion said nothing, nor indeed was her voice ever heard during her sojourn in the house. She was an ornamental object which, in its grace and fragility, formed a striking contrast to the burly solidity of Samson. Isidorita arrived smiling and almost dissolving in courtesies in the dignified presence of Dame Esther Morton, our hero's mother. The lady begged her to be seated—but the landlady declined the honor—and then gave her certain instructions with regard to supper.

"One favor more I must ask," she added in a friendly tone. "My son is ill. If you could arrange to make me up a bed in his room, I should be greatly obliged."

“With the greatest pleasure, Señora.—Nothing more? When my husband comes home we will carry in the bed—for it is rather heavy. It is all of iron and English, madame, yes indeed, English. And what else?”

“Nothing else at present; I do not wish to detain you, for you are no doubt busy.”

“Oh! no madame, I was not doing anything; I was chatting with my friends.”

Esther was not a little curious and she would have been quite ready to ask: “Who are your friends?” but happily Isidorita, who was as ready as usual to talk over and above the bargain, and who was proud of her distinguished connections, went on: “My friends—my sister-in-law Teresa, wife of the Alcalde and a person of the first position here, and the widow of the armorer, Doña Romualda.”

“Ah!” cried Esther eagerly.—“The Alcalde’s wife! My son told me that it was to the Alcalde that he owed this lodging where he has been so well treated.”

“Thank you, Señora.”

“And I should like to make the acquaintance of the Alcalde and his wife,” added the Jewess.

“Teresa would be much pleased I am sure—I will go and tell her.”

Esther went into the sitting-room adjoining, while Isidorita ran off in all haste to tell her friends, and especially Teresita.

“Never mind her not being a Christian,” she said, talking as fast as she could. “She is a delightful and most affable lady. Do not you see; she has come to this place and we ought to treat her as well as we can. As soon as she knew that you were the Alcaldesa she wished to make your acquaintance — of course ! Foreigners always respect the authorities—and as soon as she heard me speak of you, the wife—”

“We will see her,” said Teresita putting on her cloak, wiping her face and smoothing down her hair with eager promptitude. “Religion does not require us to be ill-mannered.—Let us make haste—Come. It is clear she is a lady of good breeding, who likes to be on good terms wherever she goes.”

Teresita’s face shone more than ever and its metallic lustre betrayed her agitation and excitement, which also made her rather paler than usual and gave a certain tremulous winking to her eyelids, which opened and shut incessantly.

They went up to the sitting-room; Romualda and Teresita were profuse in deep courtesys to “Madama Esther,” for so Ficóbriga had agreed

to call her; they were both a good deal confused, and could not speak without some hesitation and embarrassment. Daniel's mother offered them her hand with the most winning smiles, and all three seated themselves.

"I ask your pardon a thousand times for giving you so much trouble," said Esther. "I am a foreigner, and whenever I find myself in a new town I try to make acquaintance with the principal persons in it, and pay them my respects. In no place where I have yet been have I found difficulty from any religious difference, and I hope there will be none here either."

"Oh! no, Señora, by no means. Creeds are one thing and common courtesy another," replied Teresita, recovering her presence of mind and her flow of words; and Romualda bowed assent.

"On hearing from the worthy Isidorita, that you were the Alcalde's wife, I remembered what my son had told me.—He is greatly indebted to your husband—"

"Oh! Madame. My husband in finding him a lodging did no more than his duty in his exalted position," said Teresita, doing her utmost to affect some grace and to sweeten her accents.

"I am much obliged to him for his kind

attention," added Esther, "and should like to thank him in person."

"He will have the honor—"

"No, I hope you will do me the favor of receiving me in your house, where I will call to-morrow."

"You do me much honor—"

"The honor will be mine in visiting you, and the Señor your husband, in your own home. I have already told you that I like to be on good terms with the chief personages of a town. I have done so in Rome, Cologne, Munich, St. Petersburg—I have formed valued friendships in all countries."

"In Ficóbriga, Madame, you will find a select though modest society."

Romualda signified her profound conviction of the truth of this proposition by emphatic nods, but she said nothing. They then talked of indifferent matters, of the weather, the spring season, of the condition and products of the neighborhood. After sitting for twenty minutes, Teresita and her companion rose to retire, saying they would no longer trouble Madame Esther, who must no doubt be tired and need rest. The lady begged them to take tea, but they politely excused themselves, and taking their leave they went down-stairs.

The exclamations and raptures of the three women when they found themselves once more in committee are beyond my feeble powers as a reporter. Teresita tossed off her cloak, for her inflamed conceit, like an internal fire, seemed to choke and consume her.

“What an amiable woman! how delightful in manner!”

“Who could guess she was not a Christian!”

“To-morrow she is coming to our house. I must school Juan that he may do nothing clumsy.—No question of religion ought to be brought up under such circumstances. It is perfect nonsense! A lady may hold her faith as God has given her light, and yet be good and amiable.—We will not take to throwing stones about creeds.—It would be too uncivilized, positively savage.—They may well say we are behind the times in this part of the world.”

“Teresa,” said Romualda. “Did you see the diamond she had on one of the fingers of her right hand?”

“Yes, child—as big as a chestnut, and how it sparkled! Like the light-house lamp! And she has dozens of them no doubt, and pearls by the bushel.”

“They say these people have as many dollars as there have been hours since God made the world.—I assure you I was charmed with her. Bartolomé is quite right when he says that in every religion one may serve God—and God alone can read the conscience. Perhaps they are Christians after all but do not care to say so for fear of being made to suffer for it.”

“I should not wonder at all.”

“Nor I.”

“It is natural that she should wish to know the principal people in the places she visits,” said Teresa, whose countenance shone like a soldier’s button on a review day. “And consequently that she should have heard of the Alcalde’s wife—quite natural.—She is a very wise and judicious lady who when she goes to a town finds out the official personages.—Come, thank God, here is a stranger at last in Ficóbriga who does not begin by asking for the Lantiguas—who can find something to say besides: ‘Oh! the Lantiguas!’ Thank Heaven she is not always talking of the virtuous, the learned, the illustrious Lantiguas!—Well, I must run home. I had intended to take a mouthful of prayers; but who can think of that on a night like this? I must get everything in order. My house is not a mere hovel and I expect a visi-

tor of consequence.—I cannot lend you anything you see Isidora.”

“Why—are you going to give her a meal?”

“No—but the things ought to be in their places, wherever she may happen to go.—Juan will have the two alguaciles standing at the front door, and some of the town constables.—Good-bye, good-bye—”

“I will be with you all day,” said Romualda.

“I will send to fetch my nieces.—Well—really good-bye this time. I am only vexed our house is such an old one; now, you can buy good furniture, but in my old place everything looks dingy. If I ever have the Lantiguas’ palace, as we ought—Well, good-bye once more.”

CHAPTER XXV.

ALL GOES SMOOTHLY.

DON BUENAVENTURA was too keen-sighted to be quite free from apprehension of the consequences of the appearance on the scene of Daniel’s mother; she was distinctly in the way.

As regards that of the Cardinal—if, at first he feared that it might give rise to delay, he soon

changed his mind. His Eminence, altering his views when he heard the wonderful news of the Jew's conversion, displayed the greatest toleration, as fully satisfied by this happy issue from their difficulties, which conduced alike to the triumph of the Church and the social reinstatement of his beloved niece.

On Friday at noon, after the most solemn services of the day, at which the prelate and the whole town had been present, Don Angel spoke to his brother on the subject in set terms :

“ If, as you assure me,” he said, “ his purpose of embracing our faith is genuine and sincere it entirely alters the case, everything is easy and smooth. The Lord has had mercy upon us and has suddenly released us from our difficulties and troubles by one of those wonderful issues which He alone can find. I came with my soul oppressed and clouded, anticipating evil tidings ; and instead of darkness I find light, instead of a maze of doubts and difficulties I find a clear and simple solution. Now I can tell you the plan I propose to follow in order that all may be settled in a few days. Rome, always foreseeing and liberal, allows, in cases of conscience, an abridgment of the usual formulas and exercises appointed for a catechumen desiring to enter the Church. Here clearly

we have such a case of conscience. If there had been no previous dereliction we would have proceeded with greater deliberation and solemnity, but an unquiet conscience craves no delay in the purifying benediction. Reparation, both social and religious, is of urgent necessity here, my dear brother, and the Church will show its benevolence by hastening matters."

Don Buenaventura could have found it in his heart to say that this license from Rome to abridge the ordeal and grant dispensation in cases of seduction seemed to him illogical, unrighteous and almost immoral, while it put endless delays and obstacles in the way of those who applied to be baptized and married at the same time. However, he thought it more prudent to say nothing and was silent.

"I had foreseen this contingency," added his Eminence—"as I had foreseen all and I am not unprepared for it. I obtained at Rome exact instructions as to how I should proceed. The first step is that Daniel Morton should present himself before our united family and solemnly declare his firm determination to embrace our holy faith and to become the husband of this poor child, the victim of an insane passion. Having declared this, the catechumen must submit absolutely to me,

promising to obey me blindly and to receive from me all necessary Christian teaching. He must withdraw from all external or family influence, acknowledge no authority but mine, and live for two or three days in the closest seclusion in a place designated by me. I shall require of him during that time a total abnegation of his will, and a clear and distinct declaration that he is prepared to receive Christian instruction, and I shall demand certain proofs of a devout mind. Without this I shall proceed no farther."

Don Buenaventura frowned, but his seraphically calm brother went on without observing it:

"When I find him truly disposed to receive baptism, to the best of my judgment, I will administer it; and then at once, without any preliminaries or ceremonial or the pressure of a congregation, I will bless their union in marriage. It may be all done and over by Easter Monday or Easter Tuesday.—Oh! How great a mercy I shall deem it if God does but permit me to be the instrument of this work; to say to this unhappy reprobate of an accursed race, who has brought so much misery on our family: 'Come—all thy sins are forgiven thee. Drink of the water I give thee and thou shalt never thirst, for in thee shall be a well of water springing up to life everlasting.' I am

deeply, fully convinced that our lamented brother Juan would have acted in this case precisely as we are acting."

Don Buenaventura was of opinion that, in order to accelerate matters as much as possible, Daniel should make his declaration before the whole family that very evening. But the pious prelate said that he was anxious not to deprive himself of hearing the sermon Don Silvestre was to preach that evening, and that the next day, Easter Eve, being that appointed by the Church for the admission of catechumens, would be even more appropriate to the occasion.

"Are you afraid," added he, "that Madama Esther will countermine his good intentions? If his conversion is sincere there is nothing to fear. There is no light, no fire, so strong as that of a soul inflamed by the spark of divine grace and determined to escape from darkness. Neither mother, nor father, nor ancestors can impede a soul that has seen salvation afar and flies to reach it." And many more beautiful sentiments did the Cardinal-Archbishop utter—but they are beside the point.

Don Buenaventura went off to the Jew's lodgings, but he found him not, nor his mother, who had gone with her lady companion to call—wonder of wonders!—on the Alcalde and his wife.

The only one of the party who was to be seen was Samson who, for his part, being a devout person, had been preparing by a long fast for the celebration of his Passover. From time to time he read out passages from the Psalms in a loud voice and with gesticulations and emphasis that made the whole household laugh, and as these efforts had exhausted his strength, he was comforting himself with a half-a-dozen veal steaks as big as cart-wheels and some bottles of beer.

After seeking Daniel all over the town, Don Buenaventura found him at the house of Caifás, a circumstance which caused him no small astonishment. He informed him of Don Angel's plans and was delighted to find that the Jew fully approved of all his ideas. Morton also renewed his protestations as to the firmness of his determination, and assured Lantigua that no interference or persuasion on his mother's part could make him waver.

With all this the warm-hearted Spaniard was amply satisfied, and nothing disturbed his joy but the remembrance of Gloria's feeble state of health; during the last few days she had suffered from repeated feverish attacks, in which extreme exhaustion alternated with fits of vehement activity and, so to speak, of pent-up vitality, which then over-

flowed in her eagerly sparkling eyes and incessant stream of words. Don Nicomedes, the chief physician in Ficóbriga, whom he met that very evening, gave him a hypothetical and by no means hopeful picture of the state in which he supposed her heart and brain to be. He was a very good and a very learned man, a veteran in the fight against death, who lived in this humble town from a pure love of solitude and because he was tired of earning a large income in a more crowded city. He was devotedly attached to the Lantiguas, and a man of keen humor and somewhat eccentric. He was supposed to be a Rationalist—a Materialist—though he attended mass, and he was constantly to be seen walking in the fields—sometimes studying nature, sometimes going from hut to hovel with only two inseparable and cherished companions—a black dog and a blue umbrella. The worthy man was greatly rejoiced when Don Buena-ventura told him that things were going well, and on the high-road to marriage, and in a few words he stated his opinion that moral expansion and release would save the poor child, but that oppression and confinement would kill her. He denounced mysticism as the most pernicious form of spiritual congestion which could attack her, and thought the very best antiphlogistic would be the

unburdening of her soul of this load; peace of mind and the full tide of human affection given a healthy and natural play, and harmonized with the diviner love were, according to him, the real balm she needed.

The affectionate uncle, much soothed by this diagnosis went on his way homeward-bound, paying but slight attention to the gossip which this evening pervaded all Ficóbriga, diverting the pious town from the devotions proper to so solemn a day—

“Yes—Madama Esther has been to see Don Juan Amarillo and his wife!—And they received her, although it is Good-Friday!—And Teresa’s nieces were in the house at the time! Yes—and Romualda and all the principal ladies of Ficóbriga! and the house was as smart as a new pin—and Madama Esther was most amiable, quite affectionate to Don Juan and Teresita.—And they say that when she left she took a valuable diamond ring off her finger and offered it to Teresa who, after refusing politely at first, deigned to accept it!”

CHAPTER XXVI.

MADAMA ESTHER.

ESTHER SPINOZA, the wife of Moses Morton, a very wealthy Jewish merchant of Hamburg, who had afterwards settled in London, was, like her husband, descended from a family of Spanish Jews; but the Morton family had got itself involved with German and Dutch alliances, while that of Spinoza had kept itself unmixed, and its pedigree could be clearly traced as far back as to Daniel Spinoza, a Jew of Cordova, banned by the edict of proscription of 1492. Esther Spinoza was a Spaniard by blood, though not by birth; Spanish too in her serious character, her deeply-seated and strongly-controlled vehemence, her strict sense of duty—while the melancholy light of her black eyes, her tall figure, and her graceful gait were those of a true Spaniard. Spanish too was her mother-tongue that she had spoken like a native, from her cradle. It is a well-known fact that all the Hebrew families descended from the Spanish exiles have clung to that language, though for lack of re-planting on its native soil it has often degenerated

greatly; and the Spaniard who, even at the present day, visits Constantinople, Belgrade, Jerusalem, Venice, Rome or Cairo—all of them places whither some of the miserable dust was blown that the storm swept from Spain—may hear among the Jews an archaic form of Castilian which rings in his ears as a melancholy and sweet surprise, as if it were an echo from the dead past of his native land—a sigh from the grave after four centuries of oblivion. The Spanish Jews, most of them very abject, have clung to the language of their oppressors and read the rabbinical books in that tongue; their love for the country that has been so ruthless a step-mother is as fervent as their devotion to that ancient eastern home which they have never recovered, and they weep for her as hundreds of years ago they wept by the waters of Babylon. The feeling is less strong, no doubt, among the wealthier Hebrews. The Spinozas loved the memory of the second country they had lost, but Esther hated the land with all her heart, excepting the language which she kept up diligently and took care to teach to her children.

She did not profess her own faith with any fervor of enthusiasm; still, she was loyal to it with a steady and dutiful feeling which was not so much devotion as respect for the creed of her ancestors,

and attachment to the name and history of an unhappy and persecuted race. This indeed amounted to a passion, a fanaticism, which might have reproduced in her the grand characteristics of Deborah the "Mother in Israel," of Jael who transfixed the foe with a nail, of the tragical Judith and gentler heroine Esther. The spirit of her race filled her and inspired her, but she had not the same devotion to its formulas and rites; and though she fulfilled its precepts with her children and servants, she did so because she thought it well to perpetuate this potent bond of union—a sort of ideal father-land—on whose sacred ground a hapless nation, bereft of soil, might meet. Esther was a model of the domestic virtues which are universal among the higher class of Hebrew women, and which need neither cause surprise nor give rise to invidious reflections. There is no need to analyze them, nor to wonder whether, as many have thought, the secret of them lies in superior culture or in intrinsic natural morality. She was a good wife and a tender mother, and those who said she was worthy to have been a Christian did her no more than justice.

Esther and her husband were enormously wealthy; it might be said of them that the Lord had prospered the work of their hands. They

lived in perfect harmony, surrounded by every luxury that art could produce. Their houses almost revived the fabulous glories of the palace of Haroun-al-Raschid. They were respected by all and the guests even of Kings; and having acquired a financial position which almost gave them the importance of a political power, they had extricated Nations from difficulties. They had no native soil, but the proudest rulers had sued to them; titles, honors, respect, consideration, position and adulation—all that potentates enjoy or covet, was theirs. They stood like divinities, before whom every minister of finance was ready to burn incense; and the Pope himself, as secular sovereign, gave them titles and crosses, and never called them *Deicides*, but on the contrary, “potent seignors.” Esther Spinoza having visited Rome, a Cardinal constituted himself her guide through the collections, and another presented her with mosaics, cameos and carnelians, while a third sold her a marble crucifix for a thousand *livres*, and for five hundred a Spanish manuscript of the Talmud, on vellum, of the XIIIth century.

They had no kingdom but they reigned everywhere, for the dominion of Mammon is a wide one; “the earth is *his*,” we may say, “and the fulness thereof,” and the home of the north and the south

winds. No one had ever thought of asking any member of this illustrious family, in the exalted position they occupied, whether they too had said : "*Crucify Him and release unto us Barrabas.*"

In spite of her fifty years, Madama Esther was still extremely handsome, as among Spanish women of rank is not uncommon ; it may be accounted for by the finely-tempered balance of certain natures, combined with easy circumstances and the inestimable advantage of a life free from anxiety, menial toil and no more suffering or sorrow than is enough to prove that perfect happiness is but a myth. She indulged in few arts of the toilet, and those she used were not to conceal her years, but merely to make them look beautiful, as though she were proud of her bright and fresh maturity, the true homage of age to youth. In looking at her it became easy to understand the lasting spring of the women of whom we are told in the Bible that they lived a hundred and twenty years and more, as though it were nothing.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MOTHER AND SON.

IT was the evening of Good-Friday, and Esther and her son were sitting together and alone in Morton's room. On the table, on which Daniel was resting his elbow, stood a lamp; Esther, seated on a sofa against the wall, was gazing at her son in silence. From the way in which the lamp was shaded, his face was in full light, and hers in shadow.

"If your obstinate determination," said she in a calm voice, "does not yield—as I hope it will; if your father's authority and mine, your own sense of decency and the fidelity you owe to our sacred Law—if none of these weigh with you, I must this day suffer the greatest sorrow of my life, for my first-born will be dead to me."

"No, mother—this is not death," said Morton in gloomy dejection. "But I must restore this poor child, whom I love, to life. I have made up my mind after long, long meditation. I have come to a conclusion which neither argument nor appeal can alter."

“But I have come expressly to alter it. When, a fortnight since, you left your home, stealing out without saying anything, I felt sure that you had come to this detestable town, and at the same instant I had a presentiment that you were about to carry out some stupendous folly. Your father wished to follow you—we discussed the matter, and I won the battle. When I started I swore that I would snatch you from this place.—Do you think it likely that I will return alone and disconsolate—that I will go home without you? If I do I will say to your father: ‘Our son is dead.’ I could never find courage to say: ‘Our son is a Christian.’”

“But I have the courage you lack,” replied Daniel with an expression of calm heroism in his pale and altered features. “I am doing this thing from conviction that it is right—in no haste and from no whim. I have laid down a plan of action, and that plan I shall carry out, because it is my duty to do so. Do you understand—mother, do you understand me?”

Esther looked at her son in astonishment, as though seeking in his face some outward and visible sign of such perverse tenacity of purpose.

“Well,” she said at last, fully aware that her son would not give way under a direct attack,

“do as you please. Go through with this madness; scorn the love of your parents and kindred; cast all laws behind you — the law of God and of society, all decency, duty, and self-respect; degrade and then despise yourself. We—we, stricken with grief for the loss of a son we have so deeply loved will weep for you as dead — not as an apostate, for as an apostate we cannot mourn for you; no renegade can ever be—can ever have been—a son of ours.”

“Nay, I am still your son and always shall be,” said Daniel controlling his bitterness. “You cannot reverse the laws of nature. Even against your will, you must still and always love me, as I love you.”

“Daniel, Daniel!” exclaimed Esther, rising with tragical solemnity, “even now you have no mother. If you have, I am not she! I blush ever to have been your mother. It was in an evil hour that I brought you into the world — an hour in which I ought to have said: ‘It is black with darkness and with the shadow of Death.’”

“Cruel!” exclaimed the young man vehemently. “But you are cheating your own heart with empty words. Even if you wish it, you cannot be mistress of your feelings as a mother, and you must still love me if in silence; all your

thoughts will still cling round me, I shall still live in your remembrance, you will still be the one soul left to pray for me. Even before Religion, Nature was—”

“I cannot keep calm !” cried his mother in extreme wrath ; “I cannot. Why are you disgracing yourself ? Why are you turning Christian ?”

“You know that already. There is a victim here, a martyr—a woman gifted with every lofty and gracious quality and adorned with all the sweet virtues of the angels. It depends upon me, on me alone, to rescue this fair soul from the slough into which I myself basely flung her, and I must do it. The whole world and God himself, the God of all humanity, cry out to me to do it. It is as clear as light, mother, and if you do not see it I say that you are blind—but you can see light.”

Esther, reseating herself on the sofa and looking down, sank into deep reflection.

“You are silent, mother ! you can say nothing !” said Morton after a pause. “I have convinced you.”

“But before you embrace a religion you must believe in it,” Esther objected. “And this cannot be a matter of a lover’s caprice. Do you believe in their Christ ?”

Daniel answered lugubriously: "I ought to be and I wish to be a Christian."

"Ah! you are ashamed to utter it; you dare not say in so many words, 'I believe in Jesus Christ,' for your conscience cries louder within you than your shallow reasoning—cries out against this apostasy. Daniel, Daniel—what has become of all your love for your forefathers, of the sacred Law in which you have walked from your cradle, of your reverence for that illustrious past in whose name that love and tradition of race which still cling to our nation have victoriously survived? Where are they, hapless son? Have we not preserved to this day, and across the gulf of centuries the dignity of despair, and given to all the Hebrews in the world an example of constancy, firmness and uprightness in the midst of all the perils through which our race has passed?—And now, you—you who seemed born to add to the lustre of our name—you, my son, beloved above men, the elect of God and men—you scorn it all, trample it all under foot; your home and family, your exiled race, your sacred Law which dates from the beginning of the world, the Law and the traditions which existed before ever the earth and the world were made and the first man had opened his eyes on the new-created light—!

“No—I know you not; you are not my son. My son would die a thousand deaths before he would kneel to a Christian priest, and a Spaniard!—or acknowledge Christ on the very soil which basely rejected us as a defilement! You know how much, how deeply we abhor this land; with your mother’s milk you drank her hatred of this hell, which spewed us out when they were weary of torturing us. The land which my forefathers remembered sadly as a lost home I have always held in horror—and it is here, on this hated ground, that you abjure your faith and forsake your people!—Treason! horrible treason! If when I first held you in my arms I had been warned of this end, I would have smothered you.”

Esther had spoken with the inspiration of rage; she had risen and moved out of the darkness so that the light of the lamp fell full upon her, and her shadow, exaggerated by her position, repeated her gestures on the wall; the form of her threatening arms waved now and again upon the ceiling like fluttering birds, and then got lost among the furniture, as if seeking a corner to hide in. Daniel had fallen into shadow, and when she ceased he spoke, as though casting a parting shaft after the foe from the abyss into which he had been flung:

“Mother, you speak of honor and disgrace, of my family—in short of social reasons, but not of religious ones. You have appealed to everything except eternal fires.”

“And that too, that too!” cried Esther, sinking exhausted on the sofa and pressing her burning brow against a pillow. “But I told you first that you had wrung your mother’s heart, that heart which would have burnt itself out in its love for you, but that I will crush it and beat it till I extinguish that fire—and yet no, in truth I do not love you now—my idolatry for our son is a thing of the past. Go—you have ceased to exist for me.”

So speaking she broke into bitter weeping. Daniel went to her and kneeling before her, kissed her and tried to raise her head.

“Mother, my dear mother,” he said softly. “Not even from your own lips, incapable as they are of falsehood, can I believe that you do not love me. I will not believe it even from you whom I have never doubted.”

“Daniel, my son,” she said raising herself, “I cannot bear this blow. I bore the early death of my two girls, but yours—a death in the hideous form of disgrace, I cannot live through that. I only ask to die before it is accomplished—I only

ask to die. Kill me yourself I entreat you, and I will die forgiving you ; and the crime of depriving me of my life will be as nothing compared to that of apostasy."

"You are beside yourself, my dearest mother," said Daniel, clinging to his mother with his head on her bosom. "It is you who are killing me with your words and your dreadful threats of ceasing to love me."

"Oh ! child of my heart !" exclaimed Esther with a revulsion of passionate tenderness, and clasping her son's beautiful head more closely to her breast. "We have sinned in loving you above our other children, and the Lord is chastising us for it. But I cannot bend to the rod, I cannot be resigned to lose you, I do not wish to be resigned even ; I must defend my treasure against all the strange gods, against the Nazarenes who would tear you from me. O Lord, God of Abraham and of Israel ! before I yield I will kill my son and myself both, for without him I cannot live."

Daniel slipped down and sitting on the ground in front of her he leaned his arms on her knees and taking her hands clasped them fondly, looking in her face while he spoke.

"Mother," he said, "listen to what I have to say."

“Well?”

“The state of mind I see you in compels me to reveal a secret to you—my secret.”

“Your secret?”

“Yes, a matter of which no living soul has the faintest suspicion excepting my father to whom I wrote yesterday; but I feel it is urgent, even necessary that I should tell you.”

Esther was eagerly attentive.

“Tell me quickly,” she said.

“It is one of those which men are wont to confess to God alone—for God alone can judge them.”

“And not I?”

“No—you will judge me unfairly when you know it; you will not understand my motives.—Still, I will confess to you for I love you too well not to do so; and I trust to you to support me.”

“What is all this?”

“I am not and shall never be a Christian.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DELUSION AND FANATICISM.

THERE was a pause during which the mother and son studied each other's faces.

"But did you not tell me that you were resolved?" said Esther bewildered.

"Mother, I will call my conversion by its true name, though at first it sounds disgraceful enough.—It is an imposture."

"Explain, explain—am I going mad?"

"My conversion is a lie.—Do you not know what a lie is?"

"You have taught me."

"That which has led me to this deceit is known to no one. I have written to tell my father and I must tell you too—"

"Then you are cheating this poor girl, cheating an honorable and worthy family?" interrupted Esther pushing her son's head from her with both hands. "Daniel, you an impostor! Oh! this is as unworthy of you as apostasy itself; what has corrupted your soul? You are not yourself.—Do you know what it is to lie? and such a lie! Daniel reflect."

“But you have not yet heard my secret; why do you interrupt me?” said her son with some impatience.

“Your secret! it is that you make a pretence of being a Christian to rescue this girl from her relatives’ tyranny, from a convent and dishonor! And such conduct is baser even than leaving her to her fate. I shall go at once to this noble family and say: ‘My son is deceiving you, cheating you; do not believe him.’”

“Yes, but they will believe me,” said Morton sadly, “for the facts support my words,” and he kissed his mother’s hands. “Dearest mother let me speak. Yesterday morning early I wandered down to the shore searching my soul. Ah! you cannot form the faintest idea of those hours of agonizing questioning. I had two consciences each equally imperative, do you know that feeling? Two consciences, waging terrific war within me. Deny my faith and race?—Abandon a woman I love and whose griefs have all been caused by me?—Of these two hideous ideas neither could prevail, and when one dragon rose up mad with fury the other gnawed with greater venom. I cried to God, cried above the tumult of the waves: ‘Give me an answer or let me die!’—Suddenly a light seemed to dawn upon my soul;

I felt as happy as a man who first sees the light of heaven after having lived for ages in utter darkness.—Oh! mother, if indeed the spirit of the Creator and Ruler of all things ever speaks directly to the mind of man, the Lord, Jehovah—call him what you will—spoke in my soul at that moment. I heard Him—heard His voice like a divine breath inspiring me wholly—it pervaded my whole being with a consolatory conviction and my over-wrought conscience, buffeted and weary, accepted this superhuman guidance with that deep emotion, that pious agitation, which can only be produced by the voice of God himself saying: ‘I am with thee;’ and the possibility of gaining my lost jewel, my wife, by means of a feigned conversion to Christianity became at once a fixed idea in my brain, and can never be eradicated.”

“And you ask me to believe that the Lord, who is the very truth, suggested this base project!” cried Esther. “Daniel—it was your crazed imagination that you heard.”

“Would to God I could only infuse into your mind the conviction that possesses mine.—A lie is infamous, and yet—surely my wife’s—Gloria’s position may justify me—nay, that perhaps would not be a sufficient motive; but there is another,

and a stronger one. Do not doubt that it was the Disposer of hearts that spoke to mine. My soul seemed flooded with rapture, and I felt the purest and highest satisfaction when across my brain flashed the supreme idea: 'Gloria will abandon Christianity.'"

"What a strange and mad idea!"

"Dearest mother," cried Daniel, with a certain wildness in his face and manner. "Now do you understand; at last you see the grandeur of a scheme which has been laid by the concerted efforts of devoted love and religious courage. I will bring into the kingdom of truth this soul which ought always to have dwelt there, this soul whose only flaw is that it is so bound to the vain sentimentalism of Christianity, to the delusive philosophy of the false Messiah.—Now you know what my notion was and its wide embrace. You understand, of course, that my triumph will not consist merely in bringing a convert to the Hebrew ritual, which I consider to be narrow and inadequate. No—the God I worship is a great God, the primitive and supreme Jehovah, the Lord who gave the ten commandments and who has never spoken since because he had left nothing to say, who, in his greatness requires us to offer to him truth, justice and loving kindness, and not idolatrous wor-

ship; who demands our thoughts and love, with good works and that self-contemplation which purifies the soul, not lip-service and forms of prayer repeated by heart. It is to this God that I hope to bring the woman I love, for He is worthy of her—and she is worthy of Him. This indeed will be a triumph and a victory! A subterfuge is necessary, but what does that signify? What is it in comparison to the good that will result from it? I shall save her from her family, from a convent, from that asceticism which is a spiritual death by decline; I shall restore her to physical health, snatch her from this horrible country, make her my wife, rescue her from the idolatrous worship of the Nazarene and that vapid fetichism which is unworthy of her pure and lofty spirit.—Oh! I have the firmest faith in the enterprise I have undertaken. I cannot be misled, it is impossible that I should be mistaken. I hear the Divine call in my ears, and the breath of life by whose inspiration the universe has its being has touched me and takes my heart by storm.”

Esther gazed at him through this speech with fixed horror, and exclaimed to herself in accents of despair:

“Oh, Lord! hast thou bereft my child of reason?”

“You do not think these reasons sufficiently justify my imposture?”

“Reasons! you call them reasons?”

“Your irony is cruel. Do you want a better reason—one that is based both on conscience and on worldly duty. These alone are the arguments that can convince you! Well, listen—I have a son.” Esther started from her seat with the shock of the surprise. “A son named Christian!” added Daniel much in the tone of those who sarcastically bid the Saviour: “*If he were the Son of God, come down from the cross.*”

“A son!” cried Madama Esther. “Her son? that girl’s!”

“And do you suppose I will forsake him? Do you suppose I will leave that hapless child, born in my image, in the hands of Catholics? His baby-life has filled my heart with the purest and tenderest feelings, and the mere knowledge of its existence was enough to make me see in myself a new man, capable of any sacrifice. In him I see the heir to my name, to my faith, to myself in every detail; and the idea that he should not live by my side, that he should owe his bread and teaching to strangers, overwhelms me, crushes me, my dearest mother. Only think—if when I was an infant I had been snatched from your breast

by Catholics who had brought me up to hate my race and taught me to curse your name."

"Do not say such things!" cried his mother in horror.

"And is this not a sufficient reason to your mind?"

"No, no; it is not a reason—nothing can justify a lie."

"God sees my conscience. And what harm is there in deceiving the Nazarene? Can he, do you think, who called himself the Son of God, claim truth from us?—Nay, my conscience is easy. The conviction has been borne in upon me, calm and eloquent as a revelation, that I am doing what is right and good in the sight of the Lord. He says to me: 'Carry out your imposture, for it is your part to bring both mother and son into the kingdom of truth.'"

"Fanatic!" cried Esther with dismay and looking compassionately down on her son. "Miserable fanatic! You are trying to give your action a coloring of religion when what really prompts you is the selfish indulgence of an earthly passion. It is common enough, in all religions, to see lovers turn mystics, either to gain an end or out of simple innocence of purpose, and they are carried away by their passion to commit the greatest

follies, fancying themselves inspired by religion. They use their religion as a love-song to woo with, and cheat themselves as well as others."

"By Heaven! and you think me such as these?"

"Yes, I do; for you always had an extravagance of enthusiasm for the Scriptures, and spent a large part of your time in studying and commenting on them, and searching out their most impenetrable mysteries, that is to say, wresting them to evil. Then, when you came home after your shipwreck, you became so absorbed in Rabbinical theology that we had to confiscate your library as they did that of the famous Spanish knight. You lived in a rapt and melancholy state.—My poor boy! How fatally true was my presentiment that your mind was giving way.—In all you have said to-day, in your feelings and projects, I read the ravings of a visionary, and the wildest and absurdest dreams. I cannot deny that there is a certain greatness in your ideas, but I can confidently say that they are devoid of common sense."

"I had thought," said Morton dejectedly, "that your superior mind would have understood and appreciated them."

"We have been brought up in practical views,

my dear son, and the habit of living and thinking by practical rules shows me the many evils and difficulties of your scheme. The first is that you will never be able to shake the rooted faith of the girl you call your wife. Be not deceived; no Catholic will ever be converted to our poor forgotten and despised law; no, nor even to our belief in one God which, though grand if you will, is vague and devoid of ritual; for it appeals only to the reason and has nothing to say to the imagination, the feelings or the senses. Even allowing for this young girl's fervent devotion to you, it is inconceivable that she should renounce the religion of her fathers—a vivid and captivating religion, which is full of realism and can be seen and heard. Ours and the Deism you apprehend, are like the Hebrew tongue, sublime but no longer intelligible. My dear, unhappy son—unhappy man, distracted by mental suffering, do not ascribe to that supreme God as you rightly call Him—a God as high and as old as intellect itself—an attractiveness which He does not possess. You dream of opening the eyes of a Christian! of a woman who has been born and bred in devotion to the crucified Nazarene! Sooner will the sun rise in the west.”

“Mother, you have no enthusiasm; your ideas

all run in a groove. But mere routine will never work a miracle in the spiritual world."

"The time for prophesying and religious wars is past. Each soul must live by that it has and not search his neighbor's house. Your fanaticism cheats your sense! You will see how this girl will despise you when you reveal your crafty plan to her—the outcome I know not whether of the maddest passion or of the most insane mysticism."

"You do not know how well she loves me, mother, nor the closeness of the tie that binds our souls together. Her lofty intelligence and that exalted instinct which leads her to exceptional views, far above the vulgar standard, will make her yield to me. Besides, Gloria is not really a Catholic."

"Not a Catholic?"

"No; for Catholicism can never be the religion of any one who is not abjectly submissive to authority, who accepts those of its dogmas that he approves and rejects the rest. Her belief could scarcely be less firm than it is.—I know it, for I have unlocked the most secret depths of her conscience, and seen it clear and transparent in the light of love. Her whole religious doctrine could be blown down with a breath, mother; her faith is based on that pity and reverence for a sacred victim which is the main-stay of Christianity

in its hold on many minds, and has made more proselytes than its most exalted principles."

"Well, and yet I tell you," Esther insisted vehemently, "that you will drink the ocean dry before you wean the affections of a Christian woman from the crucified victim.—Ah! those who devised this mockery knew well what they were doing—they knew the human heart and the weak side of human nature, namely, all that depends on woman."

"Mother, I am confident of succeeding," said Daniel, his voice tremulous with agitation. "Every fibre of my being assures me of success. Nay, the very idea is too great to be my own! It is inspired by God."

The solemnity of his words and his emotion greatly grieved his mother; she saw at once that his mind was in a state of acute over-excitement, and she dared not oppose him.

"The revelation of your secret," she said as she clasped him tenderly to her, "has somewhat modified my views. In time perhaps you may persuade me—but why not postpone this step?"

"That cannot be, mother—that cannot be," he said rising with agitated haste.

"One day only, one single day, and we will talk it over."

“Not a day, not an hour. To-morrow, to-morrow.”

“So be it,” said his mother resignedly. “I do not want to distress you. But now you need rest. I am afraid you will be ill. Will you not go to sleep?”

“I cannot sleep.”

“You will not go to bed?”

“No—I must keep awake, must think—”

“What, still be thinking?”

Esther looked at her son with bitter grief, as at one soon to be lost to her then, throwing her arms around him and kissing him almost passionately, she said :

“Since I am to lose you to-morrow give me to-night—do not leave me ; lay your head on my lap and rest ; rest your brain which is throbbing like a volcano.”

“I must think—” repeated Daniel yielding to his mother’s request and sitting down by her.

“Let your thoughts here on my bosom be of my love for you,” said Esther, making him recline on the sofa so that his head lay upon her knees. “Let this night be one of remembrance and leave-taking. We will talk of home, of the garden, your father and the boys—of Altona where you

were all born.—My son, you will not refuse me this ?”

“How can I refuse; we will talk of all that we love, talk all night till day comes and the hour—”

For a long time the voices of mother and son were to be heard in calm dialogue and at last, at a very late hour, they died away. Daniel's ceased altogether.—His mother still sighed, but he was asleep.

Oh! how sincerely Isidorita lamented that all mankind did not use the same language. With what genuine indignation did she condemn the sins which had led to the confusion of tongues. For, if Esther and Daniel had not talked in English, she might have known all they said and have repeated it to her friends.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CATECHUMEN.

ON Easter Eve his Eminence officiated in the Abbey church, celebrating the touching ceremonies of blessing water and fire. He returned home, surrounded by a crowd of people, and then dined

in the society of his family and the Curé, whom he could not cease to compliment on the sermon he had preached the previous evening on the solitude of the Virgin Mother. The worthy Romero, by the use of pathetic figures of speech and rhetorical effects of expression, of dramatic gestures and inflections of tone, had so vividly realized the situation as to draw tears from all his audience. And when, turning to the picture of the forsaken Mary, he directly addressed it, saying: "Ah! Lady of Sorrows where now is thy beloved Son?" a wave of tender pity rushed from soul to soul, breaking as it were, in sobs and sighs.

After their meal, they spent some little time in friendly chat on various subjects, and Don Silvestre discussed the promising state of the crops and the prospects of a good harvest. He said that he had begun to trench his fields and was manuring them with ashes and dung; that this should be done a few days before the maize was sown, so that the soil should be well dried and turned over, and that he—Don Silvestre—did not intend to put the seed in till the hedges that had been damaged by the *derrotas** had been repaired. He assured them

* *Derrota*, which may be literally rendered *rout* is a term used in some parts of Spain when cattle or sheep are turned into the fields to glean the last remains of the crops or after-growth of grass.

that seedlings which had been started in hot-beds would give them the finest salads that had ever yet been seen in those parts, and that in consequence of the months of March and April not having been very windy the fruit-trees were like trees in Paradise ; his grafts of the previous year were a thing to covet.

Don Angel sent to inform his niece that she was to appear in full dress, and though Gloria wanted to raise an objection she was not listened to, and the order was repeated. Even Serafinita added some adornment to her dress, without however departing from her usual extreme simplicity.

Some little time passed in these preliminaries, for even nuns—being women—cannot put on their coifs in five minutes. Don Angel took a turn in the garden, lamenting its neglected condition and the sin his niece had committed in leaving the poor flowers to perish of drought. He then called Gloria down and withdrew with her into the chapel of the house, where they remained in conference for two long hours ; the poor child's eyes were inflamed with crying when she came out, but her expression was that of a soul at peace and full of confidence. Then for a no small space of time Gloria and Serafinita prayed with his Eminence, while Don Silvestre and Don Buenaventura

gossiped in the garden and smoked some capital *puros*, since indulgence in tobacco is not literally included in the list of luxuries to be abstained from in Holy-week.

The day could not have been more delightful. There was not a breath of wind, not the frailest leaf trembled, not a murmur came up from the shore. All was silent and restful, as if Nature were holding a solemn and expectant pause in breathless anticipation of a great event. At last his Eminence, accompanied by the two ladies, returned to the drawing-room at the very moment when Dr. Sedeño came down from the study, where he had been writing several letters for his superior. No one seemed disposed to talk; all the family had an air of meditative solemnity—an evident token that this was not a day like all other days to any one of its members.

Don Angel, on going into the room, took a seat on the sofa which, in its place and degree, might be considered as equivalent to the high altar of a church; and he signed to his niece to be seated on his left hand while his sister deposited her burden of the flesh on his right. The secretary and Don Silvestre took seats a little way off; Don Buenaventura had gone out to return shortly.

The Cardinal's gentle face showed absorbed preoccupation, but of no serious character; it was like a sky with one small cloud upon it. Now and again he smiled as though to imply that he would be pleased to see the others gay; but Serafinita sat with a frown on her brow, for in her opinion grave occasions demanded extreme severity of demeanor. Gloria looked alternately at the ground and at her uncle, as though she had but two ideas—death or God. Either because she had lately been weeping, or from the rapid beating of her heart and of her young and eager pulses, her cheeks that had so long been pale were brilliantly flushed, and these reviving roses seemed the promise of a fresh spring after so many storms, for they had restored all her vividly-colored beauty.

And yet—how great a difference since the first time we saw her! The graceful restlessness and eager glances have been exchanged for a calmer and more thoughtful vivacity, as if she had learnt to feel herself the most important centre of her own attention. Between that first glimpse we had of her and this moment she had traversed the wide tract, the long ages that lie between perfect unconsciousness of love, and motherhood—as wide as from one planet to another—as long as a hundred lives—an ocean between two distant

shores, and full of sorrows, joys and anxieties, of innocence and of misery, of happiness, dread, hope, despair, devotion, smiles and tears.

Some little time had elapsed since their meeting in the drawing-room and Gloria was saying to herself:

“If only I can keep calm when he comes, so that he may not know what is passing in my mind.—But as I can read his so he will read mine.” And when Don Buenaventura came in with Daniel Morton, her face, that had been so brilliant, turned as pale as marble.

“How ill he looks! Poor fellow!—It cuts me to the heart to see him,” thought Gloria, looking at him as he entered the room. “He looks like a criminal brought to the stake.”

After politely returning his bow Don Angel begged Daniel to be seated; this being settled, the Cardinal spoke:

“The moment has come, Señor Morton, when my family open their arms to receive and forgive you. The time has come when all our many troubles may cease, and a kiss of peace and the blessing of the Church may put an end to the extreme difficulty and consternation in which we found ourselves. Blessed be the mercy of the Lord! My friends”—and he turned to the little

assembly, "this man will loyally offer his hand as husband to my niece as a reparation for—"

Here the prelate's easy eloquence tripped and came to a stand-still; but he instantly recovered himself and took a happier line.

"He will enter our family," he said. "I, for one, receive him with open arms; and this event is a doubly happy one, because this marriage, which will entail so much advantage to us, is to be sanctified by a glorious triumph for our faith. Señor Morton, do you adhere to your determination to embrace the Christian religion, the only true one?"

"I do," replied Daniel solemnly, and as he spoke he fixed his eyes on a portrait of Don Juan de Lantigua, which seemed to gaze at him in a singular manner.

"Oh! what joy you give me, Señor Morton!" exclaimed Don Angel. "On this very day the Church administers the first sacrament to Catechumens, after consecrating fresh water. During that ceremony I felt to-day more emotion than I ever experienced before on a similar occasion, for I could not help thinking of the precious prize we have just won. Now, Señor Morton, I must tell you that you will receive that sacrament of baptism; but to that end, my friend, it is indis-

pensable that you should prepare your mind for the reception of our sacred dogmas—you must submit, though only for a short time, to the exercises enjoined by the Church.”

“I know it,” said Morton gloomily. “I am prepared for everything.”

“In that case,” continued his Eminence, with a radiant expression of holy satisfaction, “I must beg you to pass a certain time—not more than two days—”

But Don Angel paused, interrupted by one of those obstrusive incidents which will occur to disturb the solemnity of the critical scenes of life—such as a duel, a death-bed, or the signing of a marriage-contract. It commonly happens that these importunate incidents are the advent of a howling cat, the clatter of a broken dish, or the dropping of a hat with a hollow bump upon the floor. But in this solemn moment it was none of these trifles that gave pause to his Eminence the Cardinal, but the unexpected apparition of a human physiognomy at the door of the room, which was gently opened from outside. It was the face of Don Juan Amarillo.

Silence fell on the conclave, and with that silence extreme astonishment at seeing that the worthy mayor was not alone. With him was

Madama Esther. On seeing a lady, all rose including the Cardinal, but no one spoke a word. The first to speak, though in much confusion, was Amarillo himself, who said:

“ Pardon me your Eminence, pardon me all of you, if I intrude—I come in an official capacity—”

“ Official!”

Serafinita gazed at him with the calm superiority of one who attaches no importance to earthly things, and the rest stood like statues.

“ Official!” repeated Don Juan. “ This lady—”

Esther came forward with dignity, and betraying neither anxiety nor annoyance, nor hurry nor mockery, she turned to her son and laying her hand on his shoulder, she said in a deep, steady voice:

“ I am here, too.”

“ What for, mother?” asked Daniel in an agony of dismay.

Esther, first fixing her gaze on the Cardinal and then glancing round so as to include the assembled family, answered:

“ I wish to prevent a crime by informing this noble family of a fact they are ignorant of.”

“ But, Señora, your son has expressed himself to us very clearly,” said the prelate, thinking he perfectly understood the state of affairs. “ It is

natural that you should oppose it—but we must support him in the pious wish he has explicitly stated.”

“But I have a declaration to make,” said Esther with a dramatic gesture. “It is my duty to tell you something that you do not yet know—and that is that my son is unworthy to be received into your family.”

“Madam!—”

Daniel stood trembling, as pale as death, and choked by his own words which he could not succeed in uttering audibly. At length he said with a hoarse bellow rather than a speaking voice:

“My mother is not speaking the truth.”

Esther’s eyes would have annihilated him if looks could do it.

“Mother—go,” said Morton imperiously and pointing to the door.

“Yes—I will go; now that they know what you are,” And turning to the Cardinal she added:

“It has been a painful task to me to come here accompanied by the arm of the law; the motives which prompted me had nothing to do with the religious question.”

“Speak—madam, speak,” said the Cardinal, much agitated.

“It is too much to ask of a mother,” said Esther sadly. “Your worthy Alcalde, who knows his duty, will explain to you.”

“I am grieved to tell you,” said Amarillo, pointing to Morton with his staff, “that I am under the necessity of apprehending him.”

“Me!”

“Of apprehending him!”

“Yes, gentlemen; and I feel it deeply. I arrest him under the orders of the Governor of the Province, who has received a requisition to that effect from his excellency the legal agent of the English Embassy—”

“This man lies, lies grossly!” cried Morton blind with rage.

“Señor Morton—” began Don Juan, flourishing his staff with so much vigor that it seemed as though he meant to put out all their eyes with it.

“Peace, peace,” said the Cardinal hastening to interpose. “Señor Morton, the first duty of the Christian is obedience.”

Daniel seemed disposed to strangle the mayor on the spot, but when he heard the prelate’s gentle voice, he paused and was calmer. Don Angel laid his hand upon his shoulder, saying:

“You have yielded yourself to me that I may guide your actions in conformity with the doctrines

of the gospel.—Very well, and I command you to make no resistance to authority.”

“But I cannot obey,” replied Morton gloomily and breathing with difficulty.

“This gentleman must depart to-morrow for England,” added the consequential Alcalde. “The authorities claim him as a criminal—having committed a crime in his own country.”

“A crime! I?” cried Daniel.

“A crime, and against your own father—” continued Amarillo.

Morton, who could no longer suppress the volcanic fires of his wrath, was about to fly at the mayor’s throat, but Don Buenaventura and Romero pinioned him.

“Wretch, liar!” he shrieked. “You are a viper, but the poison of your vile sting shall not kill me.”

“Peace, peace,” entreated the Cardinal putting out his hands.

Serafinita had gone to support her niece, who, unable to stand any longer, had dropped onto a chair.

“It is necessary that you should know the whole horrible truth,” said Don Juan, shouldering his staff and assuming all the importance of which he was capable. “So I will tell you: Daniel Mor-

ton-Spinoza was condemned by a court in London to three years imprisonment for the disgraceful crime—ah! gentlemen, my tongue almost refuses to utter the words—of having defrauded his father by forging cheques to the value of several thousand pounds—”

A murmur of horror ran through the room. Esther stood apart looking gloomily at the floor.

“Oh! what a villanous plot!” raved Morton, struggling like a madman. “Wretch! liar! May this be our last hour if I do not tear your tongue out and have your life!” And he fought desperately to throw off the two men who held him.

“Peace, peace!” repeated the Cardinal, who was almost ready to cry.

“Whose is this infernal trick? Whose plot is this?” muttered Daniel in despair. “Who thought of this plan to disgrace me—here—at this moment—before this family whom I respect and the woman who is more to me than my life? Gloria, my wife, you would cease to be the woman you are, if you could believe this man’s words.”

Gloria slowly rose and went towards the group of disputants in the middle of the room.

“The gentleman was sentenced to imprisonment,” continued Don Juan with imperturbable coolness; “but he escaped the English police.

But here I stand, determined to carry out the law, the rights of authority and public justice, come what may—but you all know me well.”

“Mother, mother!” said Morton clenching his hands in his hair, “and you—can you hear these vile calumnies and not give them the lie? Can you hear your son vilified and be silent?”

All eyes were turned on Esther. She looked round at each person in turn and in a melancholy tone slowly said:

“What the Señor Alcalde has said—is true!”

“Enough, enough!” cried the Cardinal, preparing to withdraw from the scene in indignation.

“Mother!” cried Daniel in dismay and horror.

“My son,” Esther went on with a visible effort, “has a fatal habit of falsehood and deceit. It is painful to me to be obliged to say that he is never to be believed. If this noble family wish to receive him I do not oppose it, nor can it matter if a man who has no religion changes it in name. Still, justice claims him and the outraged authority of a parent calls for punishment.”

“Mother, you?—Oh! mother!” cried Daniel in despair. “But, is it possible—do you believe what the woman says?”

“She is your mother,” said the Cardinal with a sorrowful gaze at the little assembly.

"This woman is no mother of mine," cried Daniel, and he turned to Gloria who came towards him.

"We cannot possibly proceed in this matter," said his Eminence looking at her. "This lady's revelations—"

"But they must be proved," said Don Buena-ventura with an angry glare at Madama Esther.

"There will be ample means of proving them," said Serafinita. "After what we have just heard do not look to me for support," and she walked towards the door; but Gloria detained her; then, going up to Morton and laying one hand on her breast as if laying it on the Bible to swear by, she said in the voice, as it seemed of an angel rather than of a human creature:

"If all others hold you guilty, to me you are innocent."

"Bless you, a thousand times!" cried Morton, seizing her in his arms before any one could prevent him. "And do they dream that they can part us? You are my wife—my own. I claim you.—I will carry you away, with your consent or by force, but without a thought beyond of anything or anybody. My lord Cardinal, I repeat my declaration. I demand to be a Christian—now, at once."

The Cardinal took Gloria's hand and drew her away from the Jew.

"But we —" he stammered with a frown. "We—circumstances have altered." And then all eyes were turned on Esther, who rushed at her son, exclaiming with vehement tones and gestures:

"Come, come away. Do you not understand that they are turning you out?"

There was a moment's pause and perplexity. The Lantiguas looked at each other with questioning eyes.

"It is indispensable," said Amarillo, standing however at a respectful distance, "that the gentleman should set out at once for England."

"This is a farce, a gross farce," said Don Buenaventura with sudden decision.

"It is—a farce!" repeated Morton.

"Madam," continued the banker, turning upon Esther, "I must request you to quit this house."

"It is you who are turned out, mother," exclaimed Daniel going towards her.

"And I withdraw," said Esther.

"Señora—" the Cardinal began, striving to be at the same time courteous and just, stern and bland, and trying to understand what was inexplicable and to solve what was inscrutable. In his Eminence's brain there was a mazy skein

which he could not succeed in disentangling. Don Angel prayed for Divine aid, and it was vouchsafed to him — in this manner; it was Gloria who put an end to all this disastrous conflict of feeling by saying:

“My dear uncle, why so much trouble? I do not wish to marry.”

“You—”

“No, my lord. It is plainly not God’s will that we should walk in that road and, consulting my own conscience, I have seen which is the only possible path for me. I will go into a convent.”

As she spoke, she found herself closely clasped in the loving arms of Doña Serafina, who flew to her with a little cry of triumph and joy. Yes, she had triumphed after this perilous ordeal; and she held her victim in a close embrace as if afraid that even now she might escape her. It would be no more than justice to the saintly lady if we called her by the truly appropriate and characteristic name of “*a Mephistopheles from Heaven.*”

Don Angel, his brother, and the rest of the company remained silent with astonishment. Esther put out a strong arm and let her hand fall on Daniel’s shoulder, and to him it felt like the grip of a trap. Crushed and stunned, his mind had no power left to feel or to think.

Gloria had given herself up to her aunt's arms, while the Cardinal had taken one of her hands and clasped it lovingly, and all three were going towards the door. In a last look, like the dying ray of the sun before all is black night, she sent to her lover all the essence as it were, of the feelings she so long had cherished, a look both tender and piercing. It was like the last concentrated drop of perfume exhaled from a vase.

Don Buenaventura followed them, and they quitted the room. Don Juan, anxious to put a greater distance between himself and Daniel Morton, slunk out on tiptoe, with a signal to Romero and Sedeño, and a few minutes after these three worthies were eagerly whispering in the dining-room.

Morton had sunk into a seat and his head, supported on his arms, was resting against the back of it. Esther laid her white hand on the young man's dark hair, and in trembling, but loving accents, she said :

“ I have saved you—child of my heart. At last you are mine once more.”

“ Saved me !” cried Daniel, angrily raising his head. “ But I will prove the falsity of your words—I can easily prove it—to-morrow.”

“ No—it will not be easy ; I have taken measures.”

“You have disgraced me cruelly, shamefully.”

“And what does your honor matter in this obscure and villanous hole of a placè. In the world at large it is as bright as the sunshine.—You are mine. My ingenuity and the sudden decision of that good little girl, who no doubt was aware of your imposture, have saved us. You are mine,” she repeated with triumph, “our own son; you will not now abjure and forsake your people.—Oh! my son, I feel as if you were born to me again a second time!”

“Do not shout victory too soon; you heard what she said. She did not believe you, nor doubt my innocence.”

“But she has given up all thought of being your wife. She displayed that rectitude and good sense which you are so far from having.”

“You are the impostor!”

“And you tell me so?—I learnt from you. Aye! the Lord spoke to my heart and bid me save you.—Do you think you are the only person capable of inspiration?” she went on satirically. “Nay, nay—the Lord who speaks to one speaks to all.”

“But she did not believe you—no, she could not believe you. Between her soul and mine,

between her heart and mine, there is a mysterious bond."

"She did not believe me, but the others did. This honorable family will have nothing more to say to you."

"I will prove my innocence."

"It is as hard to remove suspicions as it is easy to suggest them. That is human nature. They will expect proofs from you which they did not require from me."

"I will produce them."

"You will have to go to England, to come back again—"

"I will go. I will come back."

"But in so long a time.—Well, for the present at any rate you are mine. I have the support of an authority, of whose zeal you may form an idea, when you observe that I no longer wear that fine diamond which you gave me;" and Esther held out her right hand.

"That villain!" said Morton, "cannot long keep up the base farce to which you have bribed him."

"But the consul will be here this evening—he too is on my side."

"I will appeal to the Governor—"

“All that will take time—and besides, when once I have accomplished my purpose, which is to set an insuperable barrier of suspicion between you and the Lantiguas, I will never trouble you any farther.”

“But how can you do that?”

“By showing these people your letter to your father in which you tell him the whole secret of your conversion.”

“You have not the letter.”

“But I have telegraphed to your father desiring him to return it to me as soon as he shall have received it,” said Esther in a stern judicial tone. “Meanwhile all I wanted was time, delay, adjournment. The scene of to-day had no other purpose.”

“Delay, adjournment!” muttered Daniel, considering the simple fact with a bewildered air as if he were losing his wits.

“Yes, our friend the mayor here assured me he could detain you for three days, thanks to the maladministration which seems to prevail in Spain. Then he will say there was some mistake—or that he found you preaching Judaism in the streets—something in short; and he will not lose his place for that. Moreover, the Lantiguas, even if not absolutely convinced of your guilt, are at least doubtful, and so long as they doubt there will be

no conversion, no marriage. — Meanwhile your father will send the letter you wrote to him—”

“I will confound your plots—this cannot, cannot be. You will have pity on me, am I not your son?—And you say that twice you have borne me to light! I say that once was once too often.”

“Why will you fret for what is impossible?” said his mother soothingly. “In truth my stratagems and your delirious longing have no longer any object. Your bride has thrown you over; your wife claims her divorce, and turns to that other husband, the crucified one! And still you persist in doubting the fact, your soul still clings to her who despises you—”

“It cannot be.”

“You heard her.”

“Yes, but it was the aberration of a moment. —It will pass, she will return to her right mind.”

At this moment Don Buenaventura came into the room, as solemn as if he were come from a funeral, and in a voice broken with agitation he said:

“My niece’s resolution is irrevocable. All is at an end.”

“Is there indeed no hope?” asked Esther.

“None. Gloria will leave to-morrow for Valladolid with my sister.”

In the adjoining room Amarillo, Sedeño and Romero had ceased to whisper—they were listening.

“Let us go,” said Esther impatiently taking her son’s arm.

“All is over,” repeated the banker, quite crushed with grief. “It is not the will of God, he will not have it so; and yet, really and truly I have done all I could.”

Daniel staggered to his feet, as if he bore all the world on his shoulders; then he and his mother left the house. She walked erect as if marching to the land of her fathers—he as if he were dragged into exile. Just as they got into the garden, Daniel paused and shuddered from head to foot; he heard a voice—it was Gloria’s—laughing. Never before had he heard that beloved voice ring out in such laughter as that.

“Come—do not linger,” said Esther, guiding him onward as a boy leads a blind man. “Now, we are safe,” and in a few steps they were outside the garden gate where Samson was waiting, like a giant on guard at the entrance of an ogre’s castle.

CHAPTER XXX.
A VISION OF DEATH.

GLORIA had left the room with her uncles and aunt; all four so silent that they might have been walking statues; but from their various expressions of face it was not difficult to imagine what their thoughts were. Serafina and the Cardinal were absorbed in prayer, Don Buenaventura was rebellious. Gloria was smiling, but her pallor was that of the dead. When she had reached her room she sat down, and Serafina and the Prelate seated themselves on each side of her, each holding one of her hands.

“How do you feel now my child?” said his Eminence, trying to give a cheerful turn to the situation.

“Very well, uncle.”

“Consider duly what it is that has led you to choose the shortest road of obtaining Heaven,” added Don Angel. “Reflect, and tell me truly, is your spirit at peace?”

“Yes, my lord, I believe I have obtained peace—or something which resembles it—” said Gloria with an effort.

“You are happy?”

“Yes.—When I said the words that put an end to the discussion, I spoke—how can I tell—Because a sudden tide, a flood overflowed my soul—that overflow took the form of words.”

“Blessed be the name of the Lord!” said the prelate clasping his hands in thanksgiving. But down Gloria’s cheeks, still lighted by a smile, there fell a tear as her aunt uttered a heartfelt “Amen.”

“My dear aunt,” said Gloria—and again she smiled that piteous smile which, on her young face, was like the artificial flowers with which they deck a dead child. “As soon as you wish we will start for Valladolid.”

“To-morrow,” said Serafina, eagerly throwing her arms round her niece.

“Why so much haste?” asked her uncle.

“To-morrow, yes to-morrow!” repeated Gloria. “I only ask to die.”

“What about dying?” said the Cardinal, studying the girl’s face with doubt and suspicion.

“I call this dying.”

“She is right,” said Serafina. “Dying to the world to live to God.”

And then Don Buenaventura went to tell the Jew that Gloria’s determination was irrevocable.

“You shall go to the convent when you have recovered a little,” said Don Angel. “You are not strong enough just now, my poor, unhappy darling; you cannot hide the fact that you are suffering. The heroic resolution you have come to, and which, for the greatness of the sacrifice it involves, might purge your soul of the greatest sins if you had committed them—this effort must have told upon your enfeebled health. My child, you were really great.—How well I know the state of your soul! I know that if it is not altogether purified even now of the sinister affection which darkened it, it is clear of every sinful taint and truly and honestly resolved on rising superior to it; and even if I were not wholly convinced of this by the confession you have made me, the action we have just witnessed would be enough to make me know that you are regenerate. If I had not already said it, I could and do now with my whole heart say to you: ‘Rise—all thy sins are forgiven thee,’ and bless you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.”

Gloria bent her pretty head and the good man laid his hand on it as he spoke.

“For one thing particularly your determination is meritorious and sublime,” he added. “You said you did not believe what this man’s mother told us.”

"How could I believe it? I saw at once that it was a mere trick."

"And if you thought him good and honorable—and I confess I know not what to say myself on that point—if at the same time you believed in his purpose of embracing our faith, how truly noble of you to give him up and abandon every earthly hope for God."

"I would die rather than stand between a mother and her child!" exclaimed Gloria with a flashing glance. "But in truth I did not believe in the sincerity of his conversion, and the method selected for drawing this noble soul into the kingdom of truth was not the best or most fitting. There is another and a better one."

"Yes, another and the only one!" exclaimed Serafinita with mystic fervor, and she clasped Gloria's hand to her breast.

"He will yet be a Christian," the girl said with emotion. "Yes a Christian," repeated Serafina.

"God's will be done," said the prelate looking down. "Now my child calm yourself; you shall go to the convent when you are less agitated."

Gloria smiled again.

"You are happy?" he said. "Content?"

"Yes," said the girl with a wild bewildered look. "And I see things—things which make me

laugh.—It is all so pretty—” And she suddenly broke into the loud laugh which Daniel had heard.

Don Angel and his sister looked at her, startled and dismayed.

“Gloria, my child, what is the matter?”

“What makes you laugh?”

The poor child let her head drop against the back of the sofa, her laughter died away and she was grave again—grave with the solemn calmness of the dead.

“My poor child—my darling!” said Don Angel, and his eyes filled with tears. “Buenaventura,” he called loudly, and the banker hurriedly came up.

“It is nothing,” said Gloria pushing the hair off from her forehead. “Why are you talking of doctors and remedies? There is nothing the matter with me. I was only thinking that I would sooner die than part a mother from the child she adores.” And starting from her seat she hastily paced up and down the room.

“No, no; this death-like paleness is not right,” said the Cardinal sadly. “Buenaventura, send for Don Nicomedes.”

“He came in a few minutes since and is downstairs talking to Romero and Don Juan.”

The doctor was brought up and his jests, his happy observations and his affectionate interest in Gloria's health for a short time cheered them all. He was one of those men who can inspire their patients with such spirits and vigor as cannot fail to have a favorable effect upon their health. His practice was the same as that of any other skilful practitioner, but his patients, thanks to his personal influence, had faith and hope in his remedies. He would describe the diagnosis of a case in the most whimsical figures of speech. Gloria's heart, said he, was a horse without a bridle. Her brain was a bird over-wearied by too high a flight, but that could find no hill to flee to and that must continue to fly or drop; her nerves a den of ravening creatures each ready to fly out—and all the family laughed at the similes.

Before he withdrew, however, Don Nicomedes told Don Angel and the banker that Gloria's state alarmed him seriously, that her whole nature was in complete disorder, that nothing but the most perfect rest both of body and mind could save her life, precious to them all, and which, liable as she was to terrible nervous crises, might before long hang, as it were by a hair. Under such urgent warning they decided on putting her under a treatment of perfect repose. After putting her to

bed they sat with her through the evening, vying with each other in loving attentions, and doing their utmost to give the conversation a gay and pleasant turn. By Don Buenaventura's advice not a word was spoken on the subject of religion, nor of the scene in the afternoon, nor of the convent; sacrifice and suffering, the cross and Calvary—all were avoided.

The liberal-minded banker was deeply distressed to see all his plans a failure, and was full of pity for his hapless niece. Late in the evening he had been called down to see Don Juan Amarillo on business, and the mayor, with an utter disregard of decent feeling, had plunged into the question of the sale of the house. However, Don Buenaventura was not in a propitious temper, and the alcalde once more failed in getting a distinct and final answer; he withdrew sad and disconsolate, with no comfort open to him but that of gazing at the front of the house across the garden and planning the repairs and improvements he would effect, inside and outside, when Heaven vouchsafed him the ownership of it. Don Buenaventura went out into the town to see one or two people and did not return home till late. The family had had supper and the Cardinal had retired to his own room. Gloria took advantage of an oppor-

tunity when Don Buenaventura was alone in the room with her to beckon him to her with her hand.

“Uncle,” said she, in a feeble voice, “will you tell me one thing?”

“Whatever you will, my darling,” said Lantigua tenderly. “What do you want to know?”

“Only whether they are gone.”

“Who?”

“Those people.”

“The—”

“The Jews,” said Gloria dropping her voice till it was scarcely audible.

“Why do you worry yourself about that?—it does not matter.”

“But I want to know—oh! so badly.”

“Well, my child, they are going very early to-morrow. Mother and son are getting everything ready.”

“Did you see them?” Her eyes sparkled with sad but eager enquiry.

“Yes, and no; I saw the son. He went just now to Caifás’ house. Now go to sleep child, you must rest.” And he bent over her and kissed her burning cheeks.

The Cardinal and Serafinita presently returned; all three stood looking in silence at the

young girl, who lay with her eyes closed and seemed to be yielding to the first soothing caress of sleep. Don Angel spoke to her soothingly, saying gentle and loving things to comfort her, as was his wont when he visited the sick. He felt her pulse, and found it rapid, but not alarmingly so; he exhorted her to pray, but not so as to excite or fatigue her brain, and then he expressed a wish that she should not be left to pass the night alone. Serafinita wished to sit up with her, but this the Cardinal positively opposed, and when the good woman insisted, Gloria took her uncle's part; Don Angel was on the verge of annoyance when Serafina, to whom obedience was the first law, gave up the office to Francisca, who brought in a mattress, lighted a night-lamp and settled herself for the night. The other three left the room.

The hours glided by; the house was absolutely still. Gloria gradually sank into the vacant depths of a fevered lethargy. She was suffering the vague anguish of a soul struggling to rise superior to that death-like sleep, and her efforts had the agonized anxiety of a victim hanging over an abyss and clinging to the feeble support of a branch to save him from falling. And that abyss was Death.

At last the poor child gave it up. "I am

dying," she said to herself in stricken dismay; and then, in the numbness of her sensations and the uncertainty of her ideas, she fancied that of herself there was nothing left but a written name, and she said to herself: "I am gone."

She crossed her arms over her breast, hugging herself closely; it was a mute farewell to the two beings whom she had so passionately loved. In fancy she kissed them both; her morbid imagination gave them form and life and she lavished upon them the tenderest caresses and the fondest names her heart could invent—still she felt herself sinking, sinking. It seemed to her that she felt a cold breath blow upon her, and that, like a dying flame, flickering and sobbing, she went out before it.

"Really and truly I am dead," she thought. "I shall never see my heart's treasures again."

In her dull delirium the poor child heard the lamentations of her family, she felt herself shrouded and covered over by the kind hand of her aunt, who appeared transfigured into a calm, pale angel; then laid on a cold, hard bier, while all around her was silence and the dismal light of tapers. And yet, through all this oppressive gloom she was outside it all, looking on at the phenomenon of her own death, watching and see-

ing everything as though in a clear mirror—she saw herself reflected in it too, her beauty, love and sufferings, all that had gone to make up the hapless girl who on earth had borne the name of Gloria.

Then she found herself let down into a hollow cave, damp and narrow, without air or light; an enormous weight had fallen on her; close beside her she saw the roots of trees twined and tangled like serpents, just as, in the clear and balmy upper air their boughs are tangled and twined and afford a home for the birds. From this deep bed she could hear the footsteps of the living, and then her mind reverted with renewed energy to those she loved—she thought of them till the tears sprang from her eyes and flowed like hidden brooklets in that secret place of the earth.

Suddenly she saw the vault of Heaven and the wide expanse of ocean, but not the earth nor the place in which she lay. All was infinite space and light, an endless day. In the distance she presently perceived a narrow strip of shore, hills, trees and a tower; and from thence came a man treading with giant strides. He grew as he approached, and he came so close that as he stood by the dead girl his head touched the sky. He passed on without seeing her, and when he reached

the sea he walked on, on the face of the waters, gliding over them like a cloud. In his arms he carried a tiny creature, a child whose dark eyes shone like black stars against the white light of day. Gloria gazed at the sweet baby face—as sweet as any sacred picture of the Holy Child—and as she gazed her heart seemed to break; she saw the dear vision diminish in the distance—the father always looking before him as he went, the child looking back at her. They glided over the water—away—

Gloria shrieked aloud, and with a supreme effort—such an effort of the spirit as might bring back life and soul to the already untenanted body—she broke her bonds, tore her winding-sheet, threw off the awful burden of earth that crushed her—if it had been the great pyramid it would have been the same; she sat up, stood up, fled—

Francisca was dreaming too, but her dreams were light; her brother had arrived from America with pockets full of gold; they were both happy and rich. And in full rhythm to this pleasing vision of her mind, her body snored sonorously, But, presently she was conscious as of a night-

mare; she woke with a start, glanced at her mistress's bed, and by the doubtful glimmer of the night-light saw that it was empty.—She looked all round the room, Gloria was not there. The poor woman was dreadfully alarmed, and for a moment could not even utter a cry; she felt as if a rope were tied round her throat—however, that passed off, and with a scream she rushed out of the room, calling Don Buenaventura, Serafina and the Cardinal. Her consternation was increased by seeing that day was breaking.

“The Señorita is gone,” she cried. “She has run away.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

MATER AMABILIS.

SHE had fled at midnight by the same way as on a previous occasion. Francisca's heavy sleep favored her escape from the room, and the keys she found by her side opened the doors of the house. She had dressed hastily and was but lightly clad, with a shawl thrown over her head.

She went cautiously through the house, but with a firm step, and straight to her point, without

hesitation, with a gait and air that betrayed immovable determination. As soon as she found herself in the open air, she said to herself:

“Now for a run—hurry, fly.”

And with a light foot she went on, along the high-road. Her floating drapery flying on the wind gave her the appearance of a ghost walking by night. At last, out of breath from the rapidity of her pace, she was forced to stop, exclaiming:

“Oh! how far it is to Villamores!—and I am not there yet.—I thought I could walk there quite easily, but it is much farther, much farther—beyond those stones.”

She set out again, at first more slowly, but then faster and faster, till again she stopped close to a ruinous wall, half-covered with moss.

“Not yet,” she said with a sigh. “It is still farther—beyond that tree that stands alone in the middle of a field—across there will be shorter than by the high-road.”

Turning off from the road she took a path, crossed the field and hurried onwards; but half-way across she stopped, looking down at the grass sprinkled with flowers, that were hardly discernible in the darkness, as little nodding heads shaken by the breeze, all of one hue and scattered in endless profusion—a mysterious replica, as it were, of the

stars which spangled the wide vault of the sky like daisies of white light. Gloria knelt down saying aloud :

“ I will take him a nosegay,” and with one hand she hastily plucked the flowers putting them together in the other. The barking of a dog, startling her and frightening her, made her spring up and run on. She had reached the tree, a large chestnut, and looking round her anxiously she said :

“ I am not there yet, it is very far. Beyond that house. One struggle more and I shall soon be there.”

The moon had come up from behind a bank of clouds, like a beauty throwing off her veil, and was riding swiftly across the deep blue. Like her, Gloria never looked back but went steadily forward, increasing her pace at every step in the hope of soon reaching her destination. She held her flowers to her bosom, saying to herself :

“ It is my last gift.—It seems to me I must be getting near. Yes, I shall get there in time to prevent.—If I delay I shall not see them—fly, my soul—fly.”

She was past the house, and now she sank breathless on to a stone.

“ O God ! how far it is to Villamores !” she ex-

claimed, pressing her hand to her heart. "It is as if it were running away from me."

She threw off the shawl leaving her head uncovered.

"No, it cannot be much farther," she added. "Over that hill.—Oh! how tired I am; if my heart breaks—but how can that be if I have no body—I left it in that grave."

She climbed the hill and from thence could see to the horizon; the sea melting into the sky on one side and on the other the solemn, misty heights, the more distant mountains—the white houses dimly distinguishable amid the dark confusion of fields and woods.

"Ah! thank God—that little tower is like a finger pointing to Heaven," she exclaimed joyfully, "there it is—not much farther now. How far off is it? A few steps only—I shall be in time." But in fact she was hardly more than half-way; three-quarters of a league lay before her. By day indeed the heavenward-pointing tower was visible, but now—at night, Gloria could see it in fancy only.

"One struggle more—only a few steps. I will run all the way, for I am afraid of their following me and catching me—but where is my nosegay?" She looked anxiously round her; she had lost the flowers.

“Ah! well, farther on I can pick some more—I cannot wait now—if I am too late I shall not see them; they are rushing away, like a cloud across the sea. Ah! wretch, miserable wretch that I am if I am dead and cannot follow them—dead, in a grave at Ficóbriga!”

And she ran as fast as she could fly till she was out of breath. She heard the cocks crowing, she met two men on the road; a few dogs barked at her and a goat skipping over the brushwood made her quake with terror.

“Get on, Oh! get on,” she said to herself “only a little farther. O God! that I had wings like those of the angels as they fly from world to world.”

Presently, having wasted her small strength in fevered hurry, she found herself almost incapable of walking a step, her knees doubled under her, and her slight and weary form could hardly stand upright. It was only by a tremendous effort of will, born of the intense excitement of her feelings, that she was able with extreme pain to get slowly over a good space farther, and even so every few minutes she had to sit down on a stone or on the ground.

“Oh! great God!” she cried, resting her head on her knees. “If I cannot get there, if I am left

alone and perishing of cold in the wood here—” Hot tears rolled down her cheeks and the sudden relief came to her mind like a thaw; in an instant she recovered a clear and accurate comprehension of reality.

“I thought I was dead!” she exclaimed clasping her hands. “But I am alive, since I am so cold, so tired—why am I here? It is my heart’s instinct that has brought me out and made me walk on so far in a fit of blank delirium.—I was so wretched—I had a presentiment—my spirit warned me. Thieves!—I do not know what it can have been—insanity no doubt. And yet I do want to see them—to see them all to-night, for to-morrow I shall go into a convent or die. I thought I was dead.—Am I sure that I am not? I feel as if my body were already one with the earth, and all my vital powers paralyzed.—O Lord! lend me breath and a spark of life—I must go on, I must.” And on she went, till the little tower pointing skywards was really near.

“Here I am!” cried the poor child with a smile of contentment. “I can crawl from here if I cannot walk.” Another quarter of an hour and at last, clinging now to a stone-wall and now to the trunk of a tree, she had reached the longed-for hermitage of Villamores.

Villamores is a straggling village of houses scattered in groups, and homesteads among the green meadows. The principal group comprises the church, the village inn and two fairly-good houses of very melancholy aspect. The church is a modest and dilapidated structure with a Romanesque portico, a tiled roof supported on mouldering beams, and a little tower. Adjoining, and seeming to be one with the church itself, is a house which would seem to be that of the sacristan, and in the court-yard there was—for they have been cut down—a clump of huge, thick trees which overshadowed the building, making it gloomier even than it was. It looked like a recluse shrouded in his cowl.

On this particular night there was a light inside the door-way of this house; bright rays shot through the cracks in the panelling. Gloria went towards it, and as she approached she heard voices.

“They are up!” she said to herself, “How strange! What time can it be?” She went closer, and then she heard a noise in the church too, and saw lights within.

“They are making ready for early mass—I will call at Maria Juana’s house.”

There was a wide crack in the door of the

house through which it was possible to look in, and Gloria, as she did so, almost fainted with the shock of her astonishment.

She saw a very tall burly and red-faced man, a perfect Saint Christopher, standing near the door, and beyond the back and head of another man sitting by the table. Gloria could not believe her eyes, for surely, certainly it was Daniel Morton. The poor girl trembled so that she could neither fly, nor cry out, nor move.

Then she saw a woman; this was Maria Juana, a poor widow to whom Doña Serafina had entrusted the nurture of the unfortunate baby. She was a fine woman of middle age, handsome, robust, respectable and discreet. Since her widowhood her eldest son had been appointed Sacristan of the village, and this had procured her residence, which in truth was by no means splendid. The woman was standing at the table, facing the gentleman, and on the table stood the light. Morton had taken his purse out of his pocket and was counting out gold pieces; laying them in rows before Maria Juana, whose eyes were fixed with an expression of anxious ecstasy on the treasure poured out before her, like the fabulous wealth in a fairy tale. An idea trembled for a moment in Gloria's brain and then flashed through it like lightning,

struck into flame by the scene before her. She shook the door and knocked in the extremest agitation.

“You cannot deceive me—he is buying my child! Juana, Juana, let me in.”

CHAPTER XXXII.

EASTER AND RESURRECTION.

THE two men started up and Juana hastily swept up the money, and her terror and confusion were so complete that she stood looking about her for some seconds before she could open the door.

“Señorita Gloria!” she exclaimed in stupid astonishment—“You here? alone! God preserve us!”

“Where is he?” said Gloria, looking wildly about her.

“In the bedroom—Señora,” stammered the woman. “Where should he be?—and as pretty as ever—he did not expect this visit from his mamma.”

Gloria flew into the bedroom followed by Juana and Daniel, who desired Samson to go out-

side. Juana held the light, and Gloria ran up to the cradle, where lay a sleeping cherub, soft and rosy, with black, downy hair and its two little fists firmly clasped, as if to fight the air.

"My baby!" cried the mother in a heart-rending tone, falling on her knees by the cradle. "I wonder for how much she sold you?"

Maria Juana stammered out a few unintelligible words of excuse.

"I forgive you," said Gloria without looking at her; then turning to Morton she said, but without bitterness:

"Is it true that you were buying him?"

"It is true," he said gravely. "A man is not a mother. I wish to have him with me, and I will."

Gloria knelt by the cradle for a few minutes of solemn silence. Then she said:

"God must have led me here this night to prevent your robbing me of my child."

"Robbing you! Do you say so of his father?"

"It is true, I was wrong," answered Gloria looking tenderly at him. "But yet, when I am dead he must be in the care of my family."

"And why not in mine?"

"Because you will be too far away. I shall never see him again; still, knowing that my grave

is not far from the spot where he lives, I shall comfort myself as I lie below with fancying that I hear his first little footsteps.—But I ought not to speak so—ought I? My miserable body will be but dust and will neither hear nor feel. In purgatory, where my soul will be suffering, I shall at least have the consolation of thinking of my child on earth as a Christian.”

Maria Juana had stolen out leaving them together; the room was small but clean. The bed, the cradle and two chairs almost filled it, and on the walls besides a crucifix there were a variety of devotional prints, among them one drawn in chalks and representing the footprints of our Lord and of His mother.

Daniel, like Gloria, sat down by the cradle; she, wearied to death, leaned against the bed. Her face wore a dark shadow, from time to time she shivered from illness and exhaustion, and though her eyes shone with unusual brilliancy, she could not hold up her pretty head without the support of her hand. “Gloria, my heart’s love,” said the young man putting his arm round her shoulders. “You are uneasy, but if it is on account of what I purposed this night, be comforted. I will not do it against your will.”

“I have no will.”

“You had a will—a very decided and vigorous will,” said Morton in a tone of bitter resentment, “to reject me, to renounce being my wife, and dedicate yourself to asceticism in a convent.—And at what a moment! To throw me over at the very moment when I was making for you the greatest and most painful sacrifice of all.”

“I know—I know; that of adopting a religion you abhor. What a frightful thing it is to force a free soul to stoop to such a lie! and how clearly I read your soul! But you told me that nothing I feel is unknown to you.”

“That is true.”

“It is the same with me. I saw you to-day in that awful struggle with your conscience and I was frightened.”

“Frightened?”

“Yes, it terrified me to see you making that superhuman effort to swear to a faith in a God in whom you do not believe. I value the sacrifice, it is precious to my woman’s heart—but I cannot accept it. My uncles, who are wise, were deceived, but I, who am but a little fool—I looked in your eyes and read your purpose. There are times when God endows me with a terrible perspicacity. No, you will never be a Christian, if my God does not enlighten you—and he has not, not yet.”

“It is very true,” said Daniel confounded. “My conversion was only feigned. Why should I deny it? It could not be otherwise. Still, you must admit that, such as I was, I came to seek and join you; you might have trusted that we should learn to understand each other after we were married.”

“I did think so—” answered Gloria tenderly. “I said to myself he is winning me by deceit—still, when he lives always by my side, our souls will mingle as our lives do, and I shall make him a real, true Christian. Insensibly, by degrees, we shall come to think and believe the same things.”

“And why, oh! why did you not cling to that grand idea?” cried Daniel in despair. “Why, when I was on the point of saving you, did you elude me and treat me with such incomprehensible contempt.”

“Ah—I could not bear to tear you from your mother. I saw her like a lioness robbed of her young, and the hideous lies she could bear to tell about you showed me what the strength of her mother’s love must be, and of her religious fanaticism.”

“No; it is not religious, it is the fanaticism of race.”

“It is the same thing in the end. At that in-

stant I understood that you were lost to your mother for my sake. You see, her despair roused an echo of anguish in my own soul.—What she felt I might feel too! I thought of my son, my baby.—Woe is me! If I were to live many years and see him grow up, and then suddenly forsake me to marry a woman of another religion—the thought seemed to kill me—I could not bear it.” And looking at the infant she cried in terror:

“If I were to live to see you leave me for a woman who hated Christ!—”

She hid her face in her hands in delirious sorrow.

“Religion!” said Morton gloomily. “It is always the same. A hideous bogie that pursues us, terrifies us, torments us. A horrible phantom that overshadows our conscience, meet it when and where we may; leaving us not an idea, not a feeling, not an impulse unfettered and free. Is it not awful that that which is directly bestowed by God should at times turn to a curse.”

“Ah! do not say so,” said the girl reproachfully. “Why should we grieve, after all, for these earthly misfortunes? The earth is small and Heaven is wide. Here we are in slavery, there all is perfect freedom. Why do you distress yourself? Why do you think so much of what

I did this evening? What does it matter? Parting on earth is union in Heaven."

"Your faith is great."

"Yes—my faith is great; and so will yours be, for you will be saved—God will call you and you will be a Christian. The hour is not yet, but it will come. It is as clear to me as the day. Besides, what can raise and purify the soul like sacrifice? I ought to do this, long to do it.—All that we deny ourselves here, will be given to us there."

"Poor child!" exclaimed Daniel, in tender pity. "You are deluded by an over-excited enthusiasm. For pity's sake, do not distort the ideal of sacrifice by forcing it to contravene the natural laws of God. If you love me, why this cruel renunciation?"

"To save you—there is no redemption without a victim."

"Yes, there may be—I swear to you, there may be."

"Nay, but you shall be saved."

"My salvation is in loving you—I ask no other."

"You shall enter into Paradise with me."

"I am in Paradise so long as I am with you."

"I am content, you are tormented; I believe

and trust, you doubt; I am confident of our future happiness, while your soul, unable to understand it, wanders or struggles with the errors that cheat it. But it will come out of that chaos!—Oh! how could I have died without saying all this to you! My worst torment was seeing myself at the edge of the grave without a moment to spare to tell you all I had to say. I could not bear it—my mind wandered as if I were dying—I felt life departing—I raved and talked wildly and laughed like a crazy creature—I felt my limbs racked with the horrible convulsions of death—then some mysterious power, some overwhelming force dragged me from my bed and brought me here. And amid all my frenzy, my reason clung clearly and steadfastly to one idea—that you would rob me of my child, so as to possess me in him at least. My uncle told me he had seen you at Mundideo's; that roused my suspicions. I was dying, but I was not dead—and if I had been, I should have come to life again—I rushed out, ran, flew—Ah! joy! I have told you my last thoughts before I die; those thoughts would have burdened my soul if I had taken them with me.”

Her head dropped on to the bed by which she sat; Morton supported her in his arms.

“I am happy—here—” she said, looking into

his eyes as he bent over her. "My boy—and you—all I love in the world."

"These are natural feelings—the wholesomest and the most pleasing in the eyes of God," said Morton soothingly. "Why did you not act upon them and cast all else aside?"

"My friend," she said, closing her eyes, "God shows me much mercy in letting me die thus."

"Do not think of dying," cried Daniel terrified at Gloria's utter prostration. "Shall I call Juana? What is the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing—" said Gloria looking still closer into his face—so close that their eyes were reflected in each other. "Do not call any one. If any one else comes we shall no longer be alone.—No. I am happy. Where is the little one?"

"Here—do you not see him?"

"Will you do me a favor?"

"What?"

"Oh! I cannot move. I feel as if all my life had come to a stand-still and nothing had strength left to move but my beating heart.—Lift me up and lay me on the bed; then put my baby by my side—"

Daniel did as she asked him; then he said:

"I will fetch some one."

"No, no, I entreat you not; I want nothing;

I am much better now—I feel just as usual.—Tell me, we are alone?”

“Quite alone.—Why do you not go to sleep my darling?” said her lover kissing the pretty head as it lay on the pillow.

“I am going to sleep, my love!” said Gloria in a tone of glad confidence. “And I can promise you not to wake for some little time.”

“I shall go and call Juana,” said Morton, more and more alarmed.

“If you do I will go home to sleep,” said Gloria clinging to his arm. “For the ill I am suffering from, your company and my baby’s are the best comfort.”

“Thank God for those blessed words!” cried Morton in an ecstasy of delight and emotion. “And even so I cannot call you my wife! It is a crime, a horrible sin for which God—be he your God or mine—cannot demand an account in the life to come!”

“Ah! you look at it from a low and narrow point of view. I cling to the idea of our union in a much higher sense, and you will see it when you are saved—then you will thank me, now you are blind—but tell me, are we alone?”

“Alone. Oh! if only we could remain so—if we could fly; escape from this world and make a

world for ourselves! How soon, my dearest, would we demolish those altars on whose steps we have been slaughtered, and raise in their place one single one at which we both might worship!"

"That will happen when you are led to Christ," cried the girl rapturously. "I shall be far away; still, wide as infinite space must be, I shall know you and give you my hand."

"Christ!—Always that word!"

"Always! I know that I shall enter into His kingdom and that is my one consolation, the one thought that has kept me from despair and hell, which is making my death easy, leaves my spirit pure and assures me of my acceptance in Heaven. By it, death is made sweet to me, and it fills my last moments with joy!"

"For God's sake, do not talk of dying," said Daniel. "You will live and be mine. Give me your hand."

"I give you my heart," said Gloria in a tone of divine tenderness, as she pressed the Jew's hand to her breast. "I have been yours ever since I first drew the breath of life. I have loved you, a Jew, as I should have loved you a Christian; for in the sight of Christ all men are alike. Husband! I call you by the name which I have never ceased to

give you in my thoughts.—I have lived in you and I die in you.”

“And yet, cruel soul, you are the cause of our parting; the innocent accomplice of my mother, you have helped her to frustrate my plans.”

“Yes—because her despair would have burdened my conscience. Before I had seen her I had said: ‘I will die rather than part mother and son.’ Besides, your conversion was a lie.”

“I admire the sacrifice, but I cannot understand it,” said Daniel bitterly. “And the issue, the climax, where is it to be realized? In that horrible convent where you go to-morrow.”

“No—in Heaven,” said Gloria with an angelic smile. “I am glad and thankful that death will save me from the convent. It is better so, much better. In the convent I could never, never have turned my love for you into that mystical passion which my aunt set before me as the height of Christian perfection; I could not possibly have forgotten my child, nor have helped thinking of it incessantly. As it is—I die after having truly renounced every earthly joy, I have carried my cross long enough, and I die trusting in God to save us both.”

“Oh! but you will not die—you must not die,” cried Daniel kissing her forehead. “If you

do, it will be suicide ; you will be a victim to this senseless mortification of the spirit, this cruel renunciation of all natural joy. Poor wandering angel ! You have been killing yourself by inches, day by day. To suffer may be meritorious, but suffering for suffering's sake can never constitute a religion. You have thrown up a future that might have been happy, and annihilated a future generation. You have killed yourself—you are killing me, and have postponed our union and happiness till the next world, when they might have been perfect in this.—You have interfered with the dealings of the Lord, my poor love.”

“You were not a Christian—you do not understand ; but you will. I could not be your wife in this world, because your conversion was a falsehood. But it does not trouble me ; the soul is free, and eternity will give us time, and a thousand ways of attaining the end we desire.—I die gladly and feel the greatest bliss as I say, Daniel, you will be saved, and through my mediation—I am sure.” Her voice failed, and she shivered violently.

“I am cold,” she said, “cover me over. These last little services will help to impress my memory on your heart. God has granted me the joy of dying in your arms, for so my death is a seal set on you in sign of the redemption to come.”

“Do not talk of dying—do not talk so!” exclaimed Daniel, wrapping her in the bed-coverings.

“I have been dying a long time,” she said. “My heart, which is where my wound is, has warned me of my end. At this moment it is beating, beating, as though it would burst.”

“Your excited state deceives you. Live—if not for me, if only to undergo that other death in the doubtful perfection of a convent!”

“God has been good to me—how good!” Gloria went on. “Good to let me die by you, to save me from the cloister where the thoughts of you and my child would never have let me be holy. Christ will have mercy on me; He will teach me the true meaning of divine love, though there must still be something in it of you and my child, for without that I believe there can be no love.”

She seemed failing—but added:

“I am dying—I believe I am really dead, only by the special favor of God I still can see you and speak to you, so that you may not be left alone—all my powers are deserting me, I have no strength left—feel my heart, it hardly beats at all now. I cannot see; where is he, my baby?”

“Here, do not you see him?”

Gloria rolled over on to her side to kiss the poor infant, which slept soundly.

“One thing I must ask you; I am sure you must grant it,” said Gloria, taking Daniel’s hand.

“Speak.”

“That you will not steal my child, nor buy him, nor ever try to carry him away from the country of his family and his mother. I must know that he is brought up a Christian.”

“I swear to you it shall be as you wish,” said Morton in a broken voice.

“Do not move away—husband, do not leave me for an instant.”

“I am here.”

Daniel watched her with terror, for her features seemed to alter and grow ashy grey, and her pretty eyes were dim.

“I am happy,” she repeated, closing them and putting out her hand to feel the child, which did not wake. “I hope you will love my uncles and my aunt; they are very kind and wished only to act for my good. They will bury me by my father and my brothers.”

The Jew was in an agony of anxiety; he saw that Gloria was in extreme danger, but he dared not leave her; still it was absolutely necessary to call and send for help; he called loudly

for the woman of the house, but there was no answer.

“Are my uncles here?” said Gloria, dreamily opening her eyes. “Yes, I see—here they are. I should have been sorry not to say good-bye to them.—Yes, dear aunt, you shall be satisfied with me. Have I not made the sacrifice you asked of me? Have I not renounced all, as you advised me?”

Her spirit, after the lucid moments in which she had spoken to Daniel, had again become involved in the dark clouds of delirium, a dark, confused whirl like the revolving wreaths of a water-spout.

“Still,” she went on, “your idea could not altogether master me, and in presenting myself before God I take with me as an offering those beloved treasures, those pure affections which I cannot—never could—cast off. O! great God! I cannot love Thee as the Bridegroom. I can only look upon Thee as great and infinitely perfect, when I think of all I have loved in the world as under the protection of Thy shadow. Through Thee my husband and my child may rise to dwell with me in the shadow of the heavenly tree in which the angels sing.”

Her voice failed her and her face had assumed

an altered expression. Morton could bear to watch her no longer and rushed out of the room. In the adjoining room there was no one. He saw a door which led out into a dark passage, and after going along it in the blackness for some distance, he came out by a building that was lighted up; it was the church. At the altar, where a few tapers were burning, a poor and humble priest in shabby vestments was performing early mass, and the church was about a third full of villagers. At the very door Morton stopped to shout "Help!" with all his might.

Soon after he was gone Gloria, unmindful of his absence, went on softly to herself:

"My good uncle, you have conquered—how happy for me! My conscience is at peace, and I die easy in the strength of the absolution you bestowed on me this evening in the chapel. Are you pleased with me? I hope so. I have no farther secrets to confess—did I not tell you that I could never cease to love him? and if he is by me now, do not blame him. I came here, of my own accord and not in sin—God brought us together, in token of our eternal union in Heaven, where there is but one creed, and one religion. Do not cry, be happy; I told you this evening in confession how I dreaded the idea of the sacrifice

I had to make. And you did not approve of it—you advised me to marry, as it was still possible. Then his mother came—I gave in. What greater joy than to realize with ease in Heaven what is so difficult on earth! You smile? But is it not true, am I not right? It is a blessed thought—Renounce to enjoy, die to live—Blessed are they that endure!—It is near—good night—”

Morton flew back to her side and behind him Juana and two other women.

“She is dying, she is dying!” cried Daniel in despair.

“We must send notice to the house.”

“Yes, yes, but is there no doctor here?”

“Yes, sir, we will fetch him—run at once.”

“Gloria, Gloria!” said the Jew, “do you not hear me?”

“Yes,” she said quite clearly. “My dear, dear husband, be happy—we shall be united for all eternity—Where are you?”

“Here, close to you—”

“And the child?”

“Here too.”

“Yes, I see you—I see him,” she said recovering for a time all her clearness of mind; her spirit seemed to flutter between Heaven and earth.

Daniel clasped her in his arms and kissed her

wildly, trying to restore life and warmth to the beloved form which was sinking into the chill gulf of death. Gloria opened her eyes with a bright look of resurrection, her glance had in it all the expression, and life, and feeling, and sweetness of her happiest days. And she smiled.

She who had been a joy on earth and a grace to humanity paused, as it were, at the very gate of Heaven, and turning back to gaze on this vale of tears bestowed on it her last glance and her last smile, like an exile who has learned to love the country of his banishment and turns back to contemplate it from the frontier of his native land. Then, looking upwards and holding both her lover's hands in her own, she said :

“I believe in God, in the immortality of my soul—unworthy of anything good if Christ had not redeemed it from original sin—I believe in Jesus Christ, who died to save us, in the last judgment, and in the forgiveness of sins.”

Not with his lips merely, but with his heart, which was breaking with anguish, and ignoring his calmer judgment in this agonized moment, Daniel exclaimed :

“And I will believe in all that you believe.”

The dying girl made a last effort to command her powers.

“And in Jesus Christ—” she whispered.

“Yes—in Him too,” said Daniel feeling that it would be unutterably cruel to hesitate.

“In the one, only God—”

“That, that is the best religion!” cried the Jew clasping her tenderly but more closely. “And I believe in you—in the marvellous strength of your heavenly mind, with which I hope to be one in that life where there is but one creed.”

“Mine,” said the girl with a rapturous smile.

“Ours,” said Morton, wrung with misery.

There was a moment's silence. Daniel watched her eyes as the dark mists of the unfathomed gulf rose to cloud them—mists behind which a light is shining which we on earth may never see. He felt her clasp tighten, as if he were a prey about to be snatched from her, and with her last breath he heard her last words:

“To-morrow—to-morrow thou shalt be with me in Paradise.”

She moved no more, and the nervous clutch with which she had clung to the Jew relaxed. Gloria's whole aspect seemed at once to lose the coloring and harmony of life; her beautiful features faded as the glow dies out of a spent brand; sinking to a calm and ashy beauty, every instant colder, whiter and more rigid. Once he fancied a breath

parted her lips, but it was only fancy. It was only that the sublime radiance of her last thoughts still lingered on her features, and the dead ashes still reflected the light of love. The angels, hovering softly round her, touched her with their tender hands, gazed at her, and fanned her, and the weary spirit rose to consciousness of its new life. And then—just as the liberated soul might have been taking its first gaze at infinite space—Daniel Morton heard the bells ringing loudly inside and outside the church. It was the moment when the priest within was chanting in his feeble old voice : “ *Gloria in excelsis Dco,*” and the whole world was rejoicing in memory of the Resurrection of the Lord.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ALL IS OVER.

A FEW minutes later and the room was lighted up by a level ray of sunshine—the only torch worthy of the dead that lay there. With the day came Don Buenaventura, breathless and sorrowing, Serafina and several of the servants of the family. Their consternation at finding the little bedroom

closed may be imagined; and the sobs of a man mingled with the wailing of an infant as it sucked its fists, added horror to the unbroken silence of those lips whose speech had been their chief joy. Doña Serafina fell on her knees in prayer, and her brother, after the first shock of horror and grief, began to ask for explanations which no one could give him; but later, when the young girl's remains had been carried back to Ficóbriga, Don Buena-ventura, who was accompanied on the way home by Daniel Morton—had no doubt as to his perfect innocence in this disastrous close.

Don Angel, half dead with grief, could not be induced to leave his house. Madama Esther shut herself up in hers, and cried till her eyes were red and inflamed. It was a day of lamentation and sorrow throughout the little seaport town; even the fine weather broke, the sky darkened with sinister clouds, and the sky too wept. The wind rose, and the lashed waters broke upon the coast in long drawn moaning.

They buried her next day, and crowds stood by the grave—most of them 'to see her;' for nothing excites so much curiosity as the dead who during their lifetime have been a centre of general comment. Many wept aloud during the ceremony, and Mundideo looked like a corpse himself, risen

to bury some one alive ; the Curé, that hero of the field and main, sobbed like a child ; Don Juan Amarillo represented official mourning with the strictest propriety, and many a bystander said, with more surprise perhaps than pity : “But she was a pretty creature.”*

By ten in the morning the earth had been levelled over the young girl’s remains, and the world was free to go on its way again. Ideas and events—all went on in their fateful round, leaving behind them the idea and the event that were past and perished and cut off from the whirl of life.

In this whirl we must now include the dispersion of the principal actors in this story, into dim and sad obscurity, like the retreat of an army after a bloody battle where the victory remains undecided. These noble hearts had come from distant and hostile lands to meet in fight ; the battle had raged and they had retired, each side wounded to the heart and shedding its life-blood. Who had urged them to the vain combat ? Will others return to the charge ? The contention is an old one, it has lived, it still lives and it will live ; and before it is settled, many Glorias must fall victims,

* It is usual in Spain (and in some other countries), to carry the body to the grave on a bier and not in a coffin.

self-immolated to appease the terrible Monster who with half his claws hangs on to history and with the other half clutches at philosophy; a nameless Monster which, combines in its hideous form that which is most fair on earth—Religion—with that which is most foul—Discord.

Many Glorias must fall—happily snatched from a world which such contentions have made too horrible for them, to lay their cause before the throne of the Great Judge.

Don Angel and his sister left Ficóbriga at once, he to go to his See, and she to the convent where she was to anticipate eternal bliss. The Jews went too, as exiles from the land. Don Buenaventura lingered two days to set the affairs of the family in order, and then he too left. The keys clattered, the locks creaked, all was locked up; nothing was left in the house but the wind, which slammed and rattled the broken shutters and buffeted the old house, now on this side and now on that. She who had rejoiced her little world by her presence lived no more, and the place where she had lived was abandoned to silence, solitude and oblivion.

Last year—four years after the events I have related, the house of the Lantiguas woke to new life. Don Juan Amarillo had not succeeded in acquiring the coveted property, and his disappointment and spite eating into his soul turned him so livid, that he gained the insulting nickname of Don Juan Verde, (green, instead of yellow). His wife, who fell ill of a sort of chronic jaundice, sank into melancholy. Don Buenaventura had in fact kept the house for himself, and in time returned to it to pass the spring there with his family. None—or almost none—remembered Gloria now. The glory of human remembrance had faded from her brow; but what did that matter to her who had another light, perennial and inextinguishable, whose splendor is not the less glorious for being hidden from our eyes. Fourteen different names were engraved upon her tomb; Don Silvestre had wished that some text should be added, some line of eulogy, some high-sounding nothing, such as supplies the tombstone literature of our graveyards; but Don Buenaventura would not consent. The oblivion which by degrees had fallen on her memory is no doubt gratifying to her, if indeed from the realms of immortality she ever casts a glance of pity at the little town.

Of Doña Serafinita the reports were nothing

but edifying; her sanctity increased while her goodness did not diminish—a certain guarantee of the salvation of so sweet and noble a soul. Don Angel could never bear to return to Ficóbriga; he remained to administer his diocese with the wisdom that characterized him, and is about to be translated to a more important province. He recalls with bitter regret the proceedings of that fatal Easter Eve and the doubtful conversion of the Jew.—But what could he do? A sincerely good man standing alone in the midst of the battle of antagonistic consciences. If, on that day, a soul was not reclaimed to Christ; it was by no fault of that worthy shepherd.

In the year of which I am now speaking—four years after that Holy-week which remained memorable in Ficóbriga for the splendor of its processions—(and there were never any more, for Don Buenaventura applied his liberality to the paving of the town)—a sweet little boy was wont to play in the garden of the Lantiguas. He was the living image of that Holy Child whose wise and loving eyes looked down on the world he was born to save. He looked rather as if he were the miraculous child of Art and Faith than of any earthly mother; born of the sublime inspiration of Murillo. In Ficóbriga they called

him—and still call him—the little Nazarene. He has his mother's eyes and his father's profile and curly chestnut hair; childlike grace with a certain severity, and a wonderful light in his expression. Every one adores him, indeed he is dreadfully spoiled; for Don Buenaventura can refuse him nothing, and the noise he makes in the house with his wooden horses, his hoops with bells, his little carts, his trumpets, his velocipedes, his guns, his drums, and the other toys which are constantly given him by his "mammy" Antonia and his uncle "Ventura" is a thing to hear!

The year before they had dressed him in a little black frock; he did not know why, but the reason was that his father had died in London—of what death? or rather of what disease? of one that remains without a name. He died after two years of madness, brought on, it was said, by a strange mania for discovering a new religion—the one only religion of the future. He said he had found it. Poor man! dreaming of this he had worn himself out, had lost his wits, and at last had died like a candle blown out.

Has he met in that other world the woman who awaited him there so eagerly—to whom indeed Paradise was void and joyless so long as he was not there?

My answer must be Yes—or this book would not have been written.

And yet for the present we dare not hope for the realization of the consummation dreamed of by the hapless Spanish girl and the English lunatic. You, poor, innocent baby Christian, are perhaps destined to attempt it; you, who were born of the struggle and are the incarnation, so to speak, of humanity released by love from the fetters of conflicting creeds; in whose veins the blood of hostile races is mingled, and who are the living soul in which two souls are fused—you no doubt may do great things.

As yet you play and laugh in happy ignorance—but you too will one day see your two-and-thirty years accomplished, and then perhaps your history will be as worthy to be told as that of your parents.

THE END.

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